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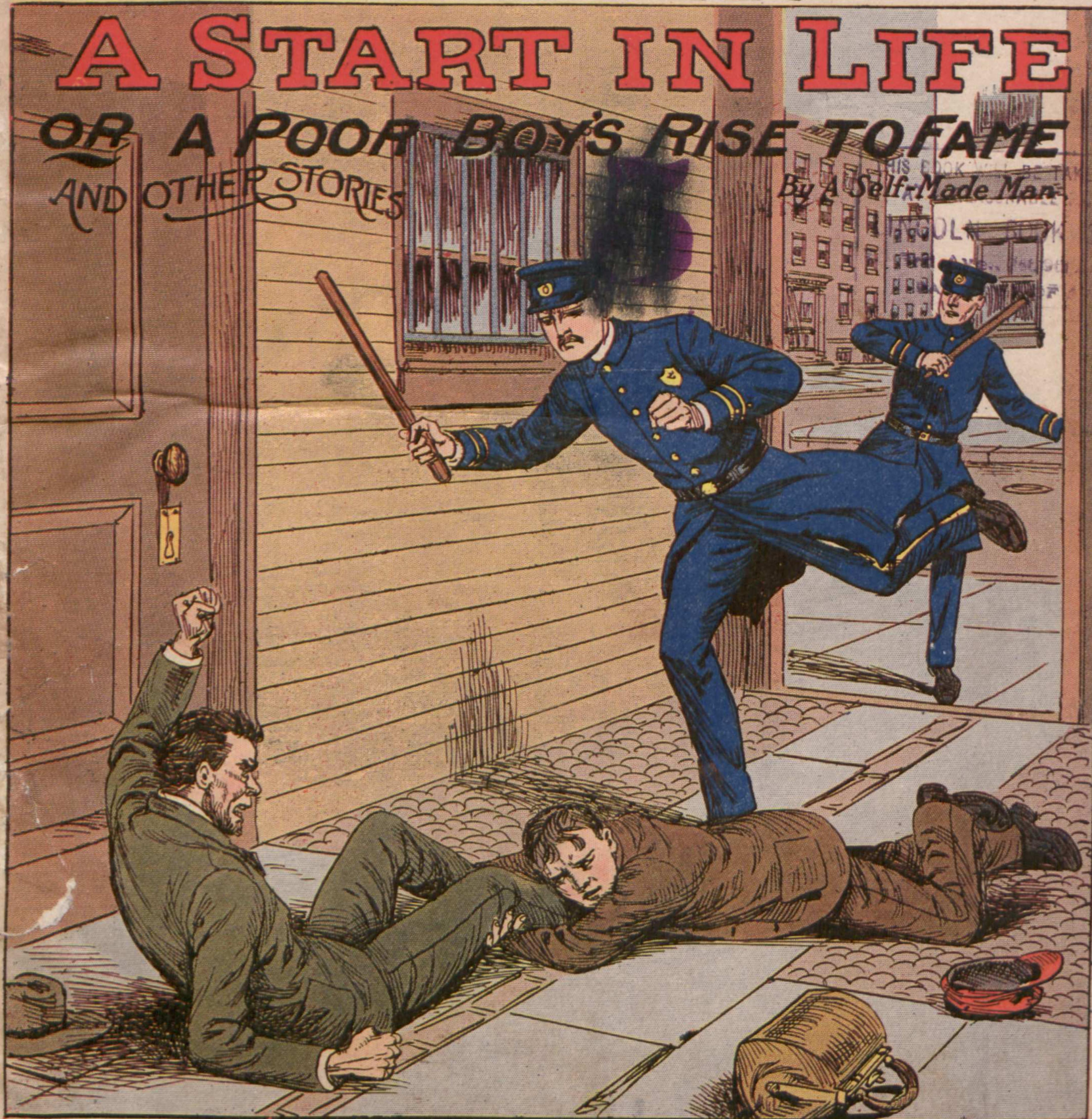
FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY. WHO MAKE MONEY.

A START IN LIFE

OR A POOF BOY'S RISE TO FAME

AND OTHER STORIES



"Hang you! Let me go!" gritted Wyse, as he tried to rise. "Not on your life," answered Fred, gripping him harder. "I'll kill you for this!" roared Jake, making ineffectual efforts to kick himself free. But the game was up.

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Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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No. 480.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 11, 1914.

Price 5 Cents.

A START IN LIFE

— OR —

A POOR BOY'S RISE TO FAME

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

FRED KING TAKES ANNIE MARSH'S PART.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Moses Wyse, to beat that little fellow so cruelly!" cried pretty Annie Marsh, indignantly, her bright blue eyes flashing a scornful look at a big, loutish boy, who held a timid-looking lad of eleven years by the ear, while he clouted him about the head with his disengaged hand.

"I ain't hurtin' him," replied the assailant, in a shame-faced way. "Jest teachin' him manners. The little imp sassed me."

"Please, miss, I didn't," blubbered the boy, whose name was Eddie Foster, the tears oozing in channels down his coal-begrimed features, for he was a slate-picker in the Black Diamond breaker hard by.

"You little liar!" gritted Moses, savagely, giving the boy's jacket-collar a twist, which nearly strangled him.

"Let him go!" ordered the sweet-faced girl, peremptorily.

Reluctantly Moses Wyse released his grip, and the little slate-picker, taking advantage of the fact, sprang away and disappeared quickly around the great culm heap, which was a massive pile of coal dust covering acres of ground and stretching down to the brink of the beautiful Susquehanna River, on the bank of which this incident occurred.

Mose Wyse was the son of Jake Wyse, the cracker boss of the Black Diamond colliery, and a cruel ogre in the eyes of all the little boys whose unhappy fate sent them to work in the screen-room.

Young Wyse had something of his father's disposition.

He loved to torture and bullyrag any one whom his hulking stature and scowling face intimidated.

And when he couldn't find a human object to practice upon, he transferred his attention to the dogs and cats, and even the birds, of the neighborhood.

As might be expected, he was a rank coward at heart.

If the person who excited his ill will was able to resist his aggression he bided his time and endeavored to get back at them in a treacherous and underhanded manner.

And this young rascal had the nerve to think he was a fit mate to associate with Annie Marsh, daughter of John Marsh, engineer of the Black Diamond colliery, and the belle of the small mining village which formed a suburb of the thriving city of Wilkesbarre, on the banks of the Susquehanna River.

He admired Annie, in his selfish way, because she was an uncommonly pretty girl, but he didn't like her way of dealing with such a disposition as was his.

"Well," he growled, sullenly, "I've let him go, and now you'll let me see you home, won't you?"

He spoke the words eagerly, moistening his dry lips with his tongue, like some animal contemplating a delicious morsel.

"No, I won't."

The refusal was short, sharp and to the point.

Annie had no use for Moses Wyse, and she wanted him to understand that particular fact.

The boy's face turned a livid, unhealthy color, for her words stung him.

"You wouldn't say that to Fred King," he snarled, in an ugly tone, while his eyes blazed with a jealous fury, "and he's only a common engineer's helper, while I—"

"Stop!" she exclaimed, with a flash of her eye which, for a moment, disconcerted him. "You shan't say a word against him in my presence. You wouldn't dare do it before his face."

"Yah!" he hissed, vindictively. "I hate him!"

"Then you're the only one in the village who does," she retorted, spiritedly.

"Am I?"

"Yes. Why do you dislike him? Hasn't he always treated you fairly?"

"No, he hasn't."

"Who saved you from the fangs of Anderson's dog a few months ago?"

"I don't care. I hate him because he likes you, and you walk with him and give me the cold shake. You think I ain't got no feelin's. You think you kin walk over me and wipe it in. But you can't, I tell you. I won't stand it. I'll git even with him, and mebbe with you, too, ef you don't look out."

He shook his burly head, menacingly, like a wild bull in a Spanish arena when on the point of charging upon the torero.

Annie tossed her head with a look of supreme contempt.

Moses took a step toward her and grasped her by the wrist.

"Do you know I've a good mind to throw you into the river?" he hissed.

There was such a malevolent intensity in his words that the girl shrank back in spite of her natural courage.

He was quick to perceive the effect he had produced, and an uncontrollable desire to follow up his advantage took possession of him.

A few moments before he had been foiled by her in his attempt to play the bully with little Eddie Foster.

Now he thought she was afraid of him and he would get square with her since she had refused to walk up the street with him.

The time and circumstances seemed to be propitious. They were alone together on the bank of the Susquehanna. Night was falling, and there was little fear of interruption, for the machinery was silent in the almost deserted colliery, a few hundred feet away.

A few minutes ago a friendly word from the girl would have thrilled his hidebound nature, now it was all different.

She had contemptuously refused his request.

And he knew she liked Fred King, and would be proud to let that boy, even in his oil-soaked and cinder-stained overalls and jumper, see her on her road to her father's cottage.

The very thought of such a thing was enough to make Moses Wyse furious.

"Do you know, I'd just as lief do somethin' to git square with you as not," he cried, glaring down into her face. "I like you better'n King ever thought of, but I can't stand for you to ride a high horse with me. The more I like you the more I kin hate you, too. If you won't be seen with me, I'll swear you shan't with him. I'll kill him first, and you, too!"

"Moses Wyse, how dare you!" cried the white-faced girl, struggling to free her wrist from his viselike grip.

"Oh, I dare, all right!" he gritted, with a sardonic chuckle.

"You're a coward, and I'll never notice you again as long as I live!"

"You think you won't," he snarled. "You'll promise right now to let me go home with you and treat me better in the future or—"

He made a significant gesture toward the swiftly rolling water.

"I'll do nothing of the kind," she replied, desperately.

"Yes, you will!" he cried, forcing her backward.

"Let me go, Moses Wyse!"

"When you answer the way I want."

He seized her other wrist and the now frightened girl uttered a shrill scream.

"Hang it! what did you do that for?" he snarled. "Do you want me to choke you?"

Annie had never seen him in such a mood before.

He had made no effort now to disguise the true instincts of his evil nature.

The mask was off, and she saw him as he really was—a thoroughly unprincipled young rascal.

"Moses Wyse, are you mad?"

"Mebbe I am. And ef I am it's all 'cause of you."

"My father will make you feel sorry for this," she said.

"Yah! My old man won't let him touch me."

"Let me go!"

"Will you do as I want you to?"

"No!"

"Then I'll—"

"You'll do what, Moses Wyse?" said a clear, strong voice in his ear, as a firm hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Fred King!" cried Annie, with a little shriek of delight.

"You!" gritted the cracker boss's son, the fire of a sullen hatred blazing in his eyes.

"Yes. And just you let Annie Marsh alone."

"And supposin' I won't?" resorted Moses, ferociously.

"If you won't, I'll make you!" replied the stalwart youth, whose handsome features were streaked with evidences of his calling.

It was an intense moment as the two boys faced each other.

CHAPTER II.

MOSES WYSE GETS THE WORST OF IT.

Fred King was one of nature's young noblemen—a diamond in the rough.

He was sixteen years of age, strong, healthy and every inch the man, from the crown of his curly brown head to the soles of his well-worn shoes.

All he needed was the polish afforded by education and contact with good society.

At the early age of ten the sudden death of his father in the mines forced him to go to work as a slate-picker in the dense, dusty atmosphere of the Black Diamond breaker, where for many months he spent long hours daily, astride of a narrow chute, sorting the slate from the coal, as both descended in continuous streams from the massive screens through which they had been sifted in fragments.

His companions then had been boys of his own age, many

of whom were prematurely stunted and eventually broken in health by the life they were compelled to lead.

But Fred survived this terrible period in his young career, though he more than once narrowly escaped the awful fate which had befallen more than one of the weaker boys, of being swept from the chute into the pockets—receptacles into which the coal, when freed from all impurities, ran prior to being loaded into the railroad cars for transportation to the market.

King was such a good-natured, sunny-faced lad that he became a general favorite, not only at the Black Diamond colliery, but throughout the little mining village as well, and when his mother died, leaving him an orphan, he did not care to leave the place.

After a time, the engineer, who had taken a great fancy to him, managed to have him assigned to the furnace-room as a sort of general helper.

Here he was employed to do the lowest and dirtiest work in the place—to wheel the refuse to the cinder heap, then to scrape the clinkers and scale from the inside of the boilers on Sundays and such other days when the engines were shut down.

Recently he had been promoted to the engine-room, where he oiled the cups, cleaned the brass and other parts of the machinery, and attended to such other duties as the job called for.

John Marsh, the engineer, began to instruct him in all the mysteries of the big engine which ran the machinery of the colliery.

He proposed to make the boy an able assistant and, eventually, a first-class engineer like himself.

It was an exceptional opportunity which was thus presented to Fred to forge his way to the front in a splendid calling.

Fred King had become acquainted with Annie Marsh when he first went into the boiler-room, and that acquaintance had steadily ripened, with John Marsh's approval, until the young people got upon a very cordial footing.

The boy was always welcomed at the Marsh cottage, for he was a modest fellow, and never presumed upon the standing he had attained.

"I would give a great deal to have a son like him," Mr. Marsh more than once said to his wife, and the good woman was in full sympathy with this feeling.

Moses Wyse, who persistently tried to force his undesirable attentions on Annie, was, on the contrary, not looked upon with favor by the girl's parents, nor, as we have seen, by Miss Marsh herself.

Therefore, Moses hated Fred, and had registered a vow to do him up at the first opportunity—not fairly and above-board, but on the quiet, if he could, for Moses had a wholesome respect for Fred's prowess.

As we have said, the two boys stood face to face that evening on the dusky banks of the Susquehanna. Moses Wyse still holding Annie Marsh by the wrists.

"You'll make me, will you?" snarled Moses, whose anger had made him uncommonly bold.

Fred didn't waste another word upon him, but grabbing his wrists with a grip of steel, made him release the girl.

"I'll kill you!" yelled the young villain, making a furious lunge at Fred, which the boy easily avoided by stepping quickly to one side.

"I don't think you will," answered King, coolly.

"I will! I will, if I die for it!" screamed Moses, livid with passion.

"I wouldn't get so excited if I were you," said the other, placidly.

Moses sprang at him furiously and tried to strike him in the face.

Fred warded off the blow, but made no attempt to retaliate. His passiveness encouraged the loutish boy to further effort.

He brought his strength into full play, and Fred woke up to the fact that matters were going altogether too far to be pleasant.

"You will have it, eh?"

Smash!

Moses got a straight one in the eye.

For the next minute it was nip and tuck between them, Fred catching a staggering thump on the chest from his enemy's big fist.

Then biff!

Wyse caught it under the chin and his head went back with a jerk.

"Have you had enough?" asked Fred, as Moses put his hands on his jaw and hunk back.

The little villain made no reply, his bulging eyes fairly snapping with fury.

Then he suddenly rushed a yard away, stooped down, picked up a big chunk of slate and let it drive full at Fred's head.

Only the quickest kind of a duck saved the boy from what must have proved a fatal blow.

As it was, one of the sharp corners of the missile tore a jagged wound along the side of his head, from which the blood started freely.

Annie, who had been watching the conflict with anxious eyes, uttered a suppressed scream and ran to Fred.

The cowardly act, however, so angered King that he rushed upon Moses with compressed lips that told how fully aroused he was.

It was thump, blif, smash, thump! for the next minute, and when he let up, young Wyse was reduced to a cowering wreck, and fairly begged for quarter.

"Get out of here!" cried Fred, unmistakably in earnest. "The next time you run up against me that way you'll have to be shoveled into a cart and carried home. Go, do you hear?"

Moses heard, understood, and slunk away like the cur he was, but his black little heart was full of hate and an unquenchable desire to get square with the boy who had so thoroughly humiliated him in the presence of Annie Marsh.

"When I went to the door of the engine-room to get a basin of water to wash up, I heard you scream," said Fred, in explanation of his presence on the scene, as he took one of the girl's hands in his to look at her wrist, chafed by Moses Wyse's rough grasp.

"I'm so glad you came," she said, earnestly; "but, oh, so sorry you have been hurt in my behalf. You are bleeding dreadfully," she added, anxiously. "Can't I do something to stop the blood?"

"It doesn't amount to anything," he answered, carelessly. "I will go with you to the engine-house and bathe and bind it up for you," she said eagerly.

"Well," he replied, pleased with the concern she showed, "come along."

They walked, hand-in-hand, to the engine-room, like a couple of children, and then he got a basin of warm water and a bar of yellow soap.

He washed the blood out of his hair and from the wound, roughly, and after that removed the grime and oil from his face and dried it with a coarse towel.

After that he submitted to the gentle ministrations of Annie, who thoroughly cleansed the wound and bound it up with his handkerchief.

"There, you look must better now, Fred," she said, smiling into his face.

"Thanks, Annie; that's as good as a doctor could have done."

"You had better go to the druggist and have it properly attended to."

"I will if you'll go along," he bargained, with a cheerful grin.

"Why, of course I will, if you wish me to."

"It's a bargain. Wait till I pull off my workin'-suit and we'll start."

Annie's father had gone home half an hour before, and but for the trouble Fred himself would have been at his lodgings eating supper by this time.

"Mother will certainly be wondering what has become of me," she said, as they started off into the village.

"Then I guess I'd better not keep you," said Fred, regretfully.

"A few minutes more won't make any difference," she replied, lightly.

"How did you come across Moses?" he asked, curiously.

"I caught him beating little Eddie Foster, and it made me so angry that I interfered and made him let the boy go."

"Good for you!" grinned Fred, admiringly.

"Then he wanted to walk home with me," she went on, tossing her head disdainfully. "Just as if I would permit him to do so."

"You don't like him?"

"No, I don't. Haven't I told you so before?"

"I guess you have, and I don't blame you."

"He's a disagreeable, mean-spirited boy," she said, outspokenly. "The idea of him grabbing me by the two wrists

and wanting to make me do as he wished. What do you suppose he threatened to do?" she added, indignantly.

"What?"

"Why, throw me into the river."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Fred, somewhat astonished.

"He said he had a good mind to do that, and he spoke earnestly enough to frighten me. When he pushed me back, as if he really intended to carry out his threat, I screamed."

"He's gettin' to be as bad as his father," said Fred. "I was up in the screen-room the other day, and the way Jake Wyse was beatin' the little kids would have made your blood boil. It was bad enough in my time, but it's worse under Jake. He acts like a ravin' demon with those little slate-pickers."

"Poor little fellows, they have a hard time of it," she said, with a shudder.

Then they entered the drug store, and the druggist fixed Fred up in good shape.

A few minutes later the boy bade Annie good night at the entrance to the lane, a stone's throw from her home, and continued on to his own lodgings.

CHAPTER III.

A PLOT IS HATCHED AGAINST JOHN MARSH.

"You're a nice-lookin' object, you are!" said Mr. Wyse, Senior, as his hulking son Moses slouched into the house after the mix-up with Fred King.

The Wyse family was at supper, Jake himself being in the act of carving a rather tough steak, while the three little Wyses sat around the board in a state of great expectation, each secretly hoping he would get the biggest piece, and Mrs. Jake was pouring the tea.

"What's happened to yer?" continued the head of the house as Moses flung his cap into a convenient corner and sneaked into his chair.

"Got hurt," replied Moses, ungraciously.

"Yer did, did yer? Well, yer ain't got no bizness to git hurt. I'll see yer in the woodshed after supper."

The significance of the final sentence caused Moses to grow pale.

"Fred King licked me, if you want to know," he said, sullenly.

"Fred King!" snarled Wyse, Senior, with an ominous glitter in his eye. "That whelp! with a hoarse road. I only wish I'd been boss of the screen-room when he worked there!" and Jake wagged his head, forbiddingly. "I'd have taken the hide off him."

From which it may easily be understood that Jake Wyse, for some reason, did not have any great love for Fred King.

"You ought to be big enough to put it all over that hound," went on Mr. Wyse, as he helped his eldest hopeful to the smallest piece of steak.

"Mebbe I am, if I got a fair show."

"Didn't you get a fair show?"

"No, I didn't. He struck me when I wasn't lookin'."

"He did, did he?" snorted Jake, beginning to feel a sort of sympathy for his son. "Give me the partic'lar."

Moses, who knew his father like a book, began to see a gleam of hope ahead, and with the view of turning his parent's anger away from himself, proceeded to give a highly varnished account of the affair down by the river.

Needless to say, he represented himself as the victim of an unprovoked assault.

"And King jumped on you just 'cause you wanted to walk home with that Marsh girl, is that it?"

"That's it, dad."

"If you can't handle him, I'll take the first chance and lick him myself," said Jake Wyse, after swallowing the greater part of a huge cup of tea at a gulp.

"I wish you'd fix him so Annie Marsh would give him the shake."

"Mebbe I will. So she talks to him, does she?"

"Yes, she does," in a tone which would imply that Moses regarded this as a real grievance.

"What do you care? She ain't the only gal in this here village."

"She's the best-lookin', and dresses the nicest, too."

"Yah!" snarled his father. "I ain't got no use for nothin' connected with John Marsh. He's proud and stuck up."

"That's right, Jake," interposed the amiable spouse, with a snap of the eye, "Misses Marsh don't think I'm good enough to 'sociate with."

"Who said so?" roared Jake, glaring at Mrs. Jake, as if he scented fresh fuel for his ill humor to feed upon.

"Well; I heerd so," answered Mrs. Jake, vaguely.

"Those Marshes make me sick," sputtered Jake, as though he was the censor of the village. "They try to make out they're better'n other folks. John Marsh thinks himself too good to drop into the 'Miners' Retreat' for his glass of beer of a night. Has it brought to his house instead. He told Gummitt, the landlord, the other day, that his house was the curse of the village. That he was making drunkards of honest miners, and takin' the bread out of their families' mouths. I go there reg'larly, and I don't take the bread out'r your nor the kids' mouths, do I, Mrs. Wyse?"

"Oh, dear, no!" Mrs. Jake hastened to reply. "The idea!"

"There!" and Jake brought his hand down on the table, as if he had clinched the argument in the right way. "Where's my hat?" he asked, as he rose from the table.

"Where you left it, I s'pose," answered Mrs. Jake.

"Where did I leave it?"

"Dunno. Are you goin' out?"

"Yes, I'm goin' out. What did you s'pose when I asked for my hat? That I was goin' to bed?" with some sarcasm. "Here you, Moses, jest you hunt my hat up and be quick 'bout it, or I'll take you out in the woodshed and dust your jacket for you, as I intended."

Moses got a hustle on himself, and was so fortunate as to find his father's hat under his own.

Jake Wyse clapped it on his head, lighted his dirty stump of a pipe and walked out of the door, making a bee-line for the "Miners' Retreat," the eyesore of the mining village.

The cracker boss was an early bird at the dram shop, and this gave him the opportunity of a long and confidential chat with Gummitt, the proprietor, for whom he had considerable of a liking.

It seems there had been some talk among the better people of the village of requesting Mr. Gummitt, a beetle-browed Englishman, to remove to a more congenial locality, and Gummitt naturally resented this interference with his rights.

He was making money, and didn't want to move.

"You kin lay it all to John Marsh," said Jake Wyse, wagging his head, sagely.

"E's a wiper," said Gummitt, bringing his fist down upon the bar with a force that set the glasses upon it all of a jingle.

He meant viper, but, unfortunately, Gummitt's language was not of the first order.

"Wot right has 'e to go round settin' people agin me, that's wot I want to know?" asked the Englishman, with a look of virtuous indignation.

"He ain't got no right," said Jake Wyse, pouring out a fresh glass of whisky for himself and then forgetting to pay for it.

"Of course 'e ain't. If the miners want to come in 'ere for a glass o' beer, or summut stronger, ain't they got the right to, I awsk you?"

"Sure they have."

"It ain't no bizness o' mine if they spend more'n they kin afford over the bar. This 'ere is Hamerica, where ev'ry individool is 'is hown boss. They come in 'ere of their hown haccord, don't they? I don't go hout an' dr've 'em hin with a club, do Hi? This bein' a free country I 'ave my rights, too, even hif I did come from the other side, which I hain't ashamed of."

"That's right," agreed Jake, emptying his glass.

"Take another," said Gummitt, pushing the bottle toward him. "Hit won't cost you nothin'. I look on you as a friend. What would you hadwise me to do?"

"If it was me, Gummitt," said Jake, in a confidential whisper, as he poured out another dram, "I'd try and do somethin' to get square with John Marsh."

"'Ow kin I do it?" asked the proprietor of the Retreat, looking hard at the cracker boss.

"Are you willin' to try?" said Wyse, regarding the Englishman narrowly.

"Hi'm willin' to do hanythink wot won't get found out."

"If you're game, I'm ready to help you," said Jake, in a low tone. "I've got it in for John Marsh myself, and I'm only waitin' for a chance to put it up to him."

"Hare you?" said the Englishman, eagerly. "Then we'll join 'ands if you say so, hand put 'im hout of bizness hif we kin."

The bargain was struck on the spot and sealed with another drink.

"'Ave you got hany plan?" asked Gummitt.

"I have."

"Wot is it?"

"He's put all of his earnin's into that fine cottage he lives in up the lane. You've seen it, haven't you?"

"Hi 'ave."

"The insurance ran out to-day at noon, and the letter he writ to the comp'ny to have it renewed never reached the post-office."

"W'y not?"

"Cause I got hold of it—see?"

Jake Wyse pulled an envelope out of his pocket, addressed to the William Penn Fire Insurance Company, of Philadelphia, and showed Gummitt the enclosures, an unsigned receipt and a money-order for the amount shown on it.

"He ought to have registered that letter. That's where he was a fool. Now, if his house burns down to-night he'll lose all, with the mortgage standin' against the land, which will wipe him out."

"But 'is 'ouse hain't likely to burn down to-night," said Gummitt.

"Mebbe not, unless you an' me put a match to it."

Gummitt wasn't so thick he couldn't understand what the cracker boss was driving at, and it took his breath for the moment.

"Hit's a State prison hoffense," he said, in a hushed tone.

"Not unless you get caught."

Gummitt regarded the proposition with some uneasiness.

"Wot hare the chances?" he asked.

"I think it's easy," said Jake, coolly.

"Come into my parlor an' I'll let the old 'ooman wait hon the customers," said Gummitt, leading the way.

With a bottle of whisky before them they went over the scheme, and, after an hour's confab, came to an agreement to put it into effect that night.

Then the two rascals parted, to meet again at midnight.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AMBUSH THAT DID NOT WORK.

When Fred King reached his lodgings that evening he found a note from one of his slate-picker friends, who had got a job in Wilkesbarre, asking him to come and see him that night, if possible.

The boy considered the question while eating his supper, and finally decided to go.

As he passed by the "Miners' Retreat," he observed Moses Wyse and a pal hanging around on the outside of the dram-shop.

The bully saw him and scowled darkly.

Just then an acquaintance of Fred's came along and asked him where he was going.

"To Wilkesbarre," he replied.

"It'll be late before you get back, won't it?" said his friend.

"I guess it will," admitted King, and with that they parted.

Moses, however, had heard the brief conversation.

It was close to one o'clock in the morning when Fred came through the wood on the outskirts of the mining village.

He was whistling merrily to beguile the lonesomeness of his walk.

It was not a very bright night, as there was no moon, and the wind soughed through the leaves and branches.

A timid person wouldn't have relished his surroundings, but Fred was built of sterner stuff, and he plodded along as unconcerned as though he was on a crowded city thoroughfare.

Suddenly something whizzed through the air and whisked his hat from his head as neatly as if sliced off with a knife.

"What's that?" cried the boy, stopping in his tracks and then looking after his hat, which had rolled against the hedge.

Whiz-z-z!

A big chunk of coal almost brushed the boy's nose.

Fred started back, thoroughly startled at the vigor of the onslaught made upon him.

A third missile passed a foot above his head and went to pieces with a bang against the fence.

It was certainly too serious to be pleasant for the victim of the fusillade.

Fred picked up his hat, and, crouching in the shadow of the hedge, ran forward.

Then the bombardment ceased, for the object of the attack had disappeared.

King didn't go very far, but hid himself, awaiting further developments.

Presently he heard a rustling along the further hedge, and then a dark patch came into indistinct view beside the opposite fence, and this was almost immediately joined by another.

Then he heard voices in conversation.

Presently two forms vaulted over the fence and came out into the middle of the road.

"Where did he go?" said a voice, which Fred was willing to swear belonged to Micky Gibbs, a pal of Moses Wyse.

"Dunno," replied his companion, whom Fred was sure must be Moses himself, as well as he could make out in the gloom.

"The rascals!" muttered the concealed boy. "It's like the cowards they are to get at me in such an underhanded way. They must have learned I went to Wilkesbarre, and they have been waitin' here to ambush me on the way back. I'd like to pickle 'em for it."

"He disappeared all of a sudden," went on Micky Gibbs, "jest as if he dropped inter the ground. Mebbe he's hidin' along ther hedge."

"Let's beat the bushes and see," suggested Moses. "If we catch him we'll lay it on to him good and thick. I don't care if we half kill him."

The two young rascals had come prepared for business, for Micky had a stout cudgel and Moses a wicked-looking whip.

Fred King heard every word they said, and their cowardly project made him mad.

"The miserable skunks!" he murmured. "They were goin' to knock me silly with chunks of coal first, and then finish me with a club and whip. I'll just give 'em a bit of surprise on my own hook and see how they like that."

Moses and Micky were gradually approaching the spot where he was hidden, beating the hedge and bushes as they came.

Micky was several paces in advance of his companion, and, of course, reached Fred first.

With a wild, Comanche-like yell, King rose up suddenly right under Micky's nose.

Young Gibbs was so startled that he let out a similar kind of yell and started to run.

Fred reached for him, snatched the stick out of his hand and gave him a good crack over the head, stretching the Irish boy half stunned on the road.

Moses was at first startled, too; but recovered himself in time to realize what had occurred, and he whistled the whip-lash about Fred's ears, raising a livid mark upon one of his cheeks.

King was thoroughly indignant before, but he was mad clear through now.

A second stroke fell upon his back and shoulders with vicious force, and Moses had drawn back his arm to inflict a third stroke, when Fred closed on him with a rush.

"You cur!" he cried, furiously. "I'll have no mercy on you now!"

Whack!

Moses got in square in the eye, and then the whip was snatched from his grasp.

"Take that, and that, and that!"

Fred had Moses by the collar of his jacket and was raining blow after blow upon his body and legs.

"Help! Help!" cried Moses, as each stroke cut his flesh like the stings of a hundred scorpions. "Micky, help me! Knock him down! He's killing me!"

But there was no help for Moses, for Micky Gibbs was out of it.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Wow! Wow Wow!" screamed Moses, struggling to avoid the terrible punishment he was receiving.

"You miserable coward! You sneak in the dark!" cried Fred, continuing to lay the whip on his enemy without the least intermission.

"Don't! Don't! Please don't! You're killin' me!" screamed Moses, in agony of pain.

"Would you have had any mercy on me, you whelp? I believe you two meant to lay me out for keeps to-night. Supposin' either of those hunks of coal had hit me on the head, as you intended they should, where would I have been? You might have killed me to-night down by the river with that piece of slate if your aim had been truer. And this is what I get for savin' a miserable hound like you from gettin' chewed up by Anderson's bulldog!"

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Oh! oh! oh!" howled Moses, dropping on to his knees. "I'll never touch you ag'in. I swear it. Please stop! Oh! oh! oh!"

The cowardly wretch, who had provided the instrument of his own punishment, shrieked, and yelled, and whined for mercy.

But for once the usually generous-hearted boy was *in* placable.

All the anger and indignation of his nature was aroused by this treacherous attack in the dark, and from which he had escaped only by a miracle.

He believed his two enemies would have fairly fayed him alive once they got him in their power, and this feeling left no pity in his heart for either of them.

Though Moses cringed and shrieked at his feet, he continued to whip him with an unsparing hand.

The young villain had never received such a punishment in his life, even from his father, who had very little mercy on him when chastising him.

Suddenly Moses ceased his heart-rending cries, and his head fell over on his shoulder.

He hung limp and lifeless in Fred's grasp.

He had fainted under the severity of the drubbing inflicted on him.

This fact brought King to his senses, and to the sober realization that he had gone too far.

He let go of Moses and young Wyse fell in a heap on the road.

Fred bent over him with sudden anxiety.

The young ruffian's white face seemed to reproach him for his fit of ungovernable anger.

"Great Scott! I hope I haven't killed him!"

The boy's voice died away in a horrified whisper.

He tore open Moses' shirt front and put his ear to his heart.

"He's breathin' all right," he muttered, with a sigh of relief. "I guess he's only fainted. I must have licked him more'n I intended. But he deserved every blow he got. Why can't he leave me alone?"

Then he noticed Micky rising to his feet a yard or two away.

He, too, looked like a mighty sick boy.

He had a lump the size of half a hen's egg on the side of the head where Fred had hit him with his own cudgel.

"Come here, Gibbs," Fred called, peremptorily.

The boy stared at him, but seemed rather disposed to take to his heels.

"Come here; I'm not goin' to hit you again. You want to look after Moses, and see that he gets home."

Micky came up slowly and looked down at his associate.

"Is he dead?" he asked, in a scared voice.

"No—only fainted."

"You must have given him an awful lickin'."

"Not more'n was comin' to him," answered Fred, starting to walk off.

At that moment a bright light suddenly lit up the near-by landscape.

"Great hornspon!" cried Fred, as the glare of flames sifted through the trees. "That must be a house afire!"

He started for the opening in the woods on a dead run.

CHAPTER V.

FRED KING IS CHARGED WITH A SERIOUS CRIME.

The glare of the fire grew brighter as Fred approached the entrance to the wood.

Some house in the village was evidently in flames.

A moment later he dashed out clear of the trees, and his first glance at a familiar locality assured him that it was John Marsh's cottage that was burning.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the boy, "this is rough on Marsh!"

Anxious to be on the scene of trouble as soon as he could, Fred cut across by a by-lane, and before he knew what was in his way had stumbled over the crouching figure of a man.

"Blast yer! Can't you see where yer goin'?"

"Jake Wyse!" exclaimed Fred, in surprise.

"Yer know me, do yer?" snarled the cracker boss, rising to his feet and laying hold of King. "Where yer runnin' to, you little imp?"

"John Marsh's house is afire, and I'm goin' to see if I can't help put it out."

Jake Wyse turned his head in the direction of the flames,

and then Fred noticed another figure snuggling down in the gloom.

It was Gummitt, the Englishman.

"What yer doin' out here this hour in the mornin'?" asked Wyse, with a wicked look in his eyes. "Don't you know you ought to be in bed?"

"I've been to Wilkesbarre, and only just got back," said Fred, struggling to release himself.

"Hold hard, I think yer lyin'. I believe you've set fire to Marsh's house yerself. It's my opinion yer ain't none too good for that kind of work. What do yer think, Gummitt?"

"Hi shouldn't be surprised if he did," coincided the landlord of the "Miners' Retreat," who detected the drift of Wyse's scheme.

"What do you mean?" gasped Fred, amazed at such an accusation.

"I mean just what I say. Ain't we ketched you runnin' away from the fire?"

"Runnin' away from it! Runnin' towards it, you mean!"

"Come, now, that won't wash, will it, Gummitt?"

"Hi should think not," replied Gummitt, coming forward.

"You seen which way he was runnin', didn't you?"

"Hi did."

"So yer see, young feller, yer ketched in the act. Come along!"

"Let me go, will you?" cried Fred, in desperate earnestness.

"We couldn't think hoff hit," said Gummitt, laying his hand on the boy's other arm. "We're going to take you to the lock-up."

"I believe you set fire to the house yourselves!" ejaculated Fred, angrily.

"The hidea!" cried Gummitt, with a look of virtuous indignation. "Did you 'ear that, Wyse?"

"You little Imp!" roared Jake, giving his prisoner a rough shake which loosened Gummitt's grip.

At the same moment Fred gave a sudden tug and tore himself away from Wyse.

"Grab him, Gummitt!"

The Englishman tried to, but Fred, like an eel, wriggled out of reach and was off toward the burning cottage like a shot.

"'E's got away," said Gummitt, in a tone of disappointment.

"Well, let him go. We'll throw suspicion on him anyway by sayin' we seen him runnin' from the fire."

"Hall right. And we can say that 'e changed 'is plan when 'e seen 'e was discovered and ran back again to pretend 'e just come to 'elp."

"That's right. We'll have to go to the fire ourselves, now, or it wouldn't look well."

So the two rascals started on a jog trot for John Marsh's cottage.

Quite a number of the miners had reached the scene of the fire by the time Fred arrived.

They were only half dressed, and many of them had brought buckets, and a chain was hastily formed to pass the buckets full of water from the well to the flames.

Of course, John Marsh and his wife had been aroused, and both were outside.

"Where's Annie?" asked Mrs. Marsh, anxiously, looking around and failing to see her daughter.

As if in answer to her question the window of a room in the rear attic was thrown open and the girl's head appeared at the opening.

Mrs. Marsh uttered a scream.

And well she might, for it was in this wing of the cottage the fire had started, and from the looks of things Annie was cut off by the flames from escape by the narrow stairway inside, which led to the second floor and her parents' sleeping-room.

A big, strapping miner, who was directing the bucket brigade, called for a ladder.

But it happened, unfortunately, that there was no ladder about the premises.

"Father!" screamed Annie. "Save me!"

Mrs. Marsh had been detained from rushing into the cottage, but now her husband made the attempt to rescue his child in the same way.

This was clearly impossible as the case stood, and he found that fact out when he reached the entry on the second floor.

The place was filled with a dense smoke, through which

he found it impossible to force his way, and he thrust his head out of the nearest window to get air.

Amid this scene of wild excitement, added to every moment by fresh arrivals from the various houses, only one person had the ready wit to see a way to save Annie Marsh.

That one was Fred King.

He noticed that the stout oak tree which grew a few yards from the cottage threw one of its sheltering limbs high above the window where the terrified girl, surrounded by the gathering smoke, her form thrown into bold relief by the glare of the flames in the room behind her, stood, begging in piteous accents to be saved.

No one observed him shin up the gnarled trunk of the tree, work his way upward among the limbs, and make his way out on that particular branch, which swayed and bent under his weight until a shout of encouragement from him drew Annie's eyes upward, and her little cry of surprise as she saw him coming out toward her attracted the attention of the crowd below.

As soon as his object was understood it was immediately appreciated, and a shout went up from the spectators, as well as from the perspiring neighbors who were passing the buckets with great zeal.

The farther out Fred progressed the lower bent the limb of the oak, until the boy, anchoring his legs around the branch, extended his hands to the girl.

"Stand up on the sill, Annie, and hold on by the side of the window jamb. That's right. Now steady yourself so I can catch you under the arms."

He grabbed her and swung her out into mid-air.

"Don't get frightened," he said encouragingly. "Grasp hold of the tree under my neck. All right. Now do you think you can hold on for a moment by yourself while I shift myself backward?"

"Yes," replied Annie, bravely.

"There's no danger if you just hold on," he said.

Then he released her, and she swung by her own grip over thirty feet up in the air.

He worked himself backward a foot or so, and then grasped her under the arms once more.

"Now let go," he said.

She did so.

He swung her the same relative distance as he had retreated, and then told her to grab hold of the branch again.

This plan was repeated again and again until Fred had got Annie well into the body of the oak tree, when he was able to pull her up beside himself.

There they rested a while to recover from their exertions.

Telling Annie to hold tightly to her seat, Fred clambered nimbly down and called for a blanket to put around the girl, who was only attired in her night-dress.

The article was soon got from the cottage, for the fire, now under control, had not reached the main part of the building.

In a short time Fred assisted Annie to reach the ground, where her mother was waiting to receive her, deeply grateful for her daughter's escape.

As the women folks gathered around the rescued miss, as is usual in such a case, King rushed away to make himself useful in putting the finishing touches to the end of the fire.

"You're a nervy young fellow," said the big miner, admiringly, to the boy.

"I'll bet he is," echoed another.

"And not one of us thought of doing such a thing for the poor girl," said a third.

"She'd have been burnt to death but for you," remarked a fourth, "for her room and the room underneath are completely gutted by the flames."

Other miners had their say, too, for all admired bravery however shown, whether above or below ground.

Fred was quite overpowered by the praise showered indiscriminately upon him, and protested he had only done his duty as he saw it.

"That's all right," said the big miner; "but you were the only one to do it at the critical moment. You ought to have a medal. What do you say, boys?"

"Aye! aye!" was the unanimous verdict of all within hearing.

The last spark was extinguished, and, although the loss was considerable, the cottage was practically saved.

The crowd was gazing on the ruined wing of the pretty house and speculating as to the amount of the loss, which all supposed to be covered by the insurance, when Jake

Wyse and Gummitt, who had left the scene a short time before, reappeared with Mr. Jinks, the constable.

"There he is," said Wyse, pointing.

Jinks immediately walked up to Fred King, and putting his hand on his shoulder said, to the great surprise of all present:

"Young man, I arrest you for setting fire to this cottage."

CHAPTER VI.

FRED BEARDS THE CRACKER BOSS IN HIS DEN.

Fred King started back in stupefied surprise, while the crowd of miners and other spectators gaped in astonishment.

"What do you mean?" gasped the boy.

"I guess you know what I mean," said the constable, significantly, tightening his grasp on the lad.

"I guess you've made a blunder, Jinks," interposed the big miner, stepping up.

"I think not," replied the officer.

"Why, such a charge against this boy is ridiculous," said the miner, stoutly.

"What's the trouble?" asked John Marsh, coming forward.

"Jinks, here, has arrested King, who saved your daughter's life in such a heroic manner, on the charge of firing your cottage. I say it's absurd."

"It is, indeed," coincided Marsh. "On what ground do you accuse the boy?"

"On the evidence of Jake Wyse and Mr. Gummitt. They are here, and you can question them. If there is any mistake, of course I won't take the boy."

"Well," said Marsh, frowning upon the cracker boss and the tavern-keeper, who now came forward, "what have you to say about it?"

"We were comin' along the by-lane yonder, afore the fire, when, jest as it blazed up we ketched this young feller runnin' away from it as hard as he could put, and we nabbed him."

"That's a lie!" cried Fred, hotly. "I wasn't running from the fire, but toward it, and you know it, 'cause I fell over you where you were hidden behind a bush."

"Don't yer tell me I lie, or I'll smash yer!" retorted Wyse, in a threatening way.

"Stop!" exclaimed John Marsh, catching his uplifted arm. "What else is there to your story?"

"When he found he was ketched he fought Gummitt and me, and got away. That's the whole thing, and I kin prove it by Gummitt," and he looked at the tavern-keeper for confirmation.

"Hi ham villin' to swear to hit," asserted Gummitt, "'cause Hi was there."

"You met these men, then, Fred?" asked Marsh, kindly. "Remember, I haven't the slightest suspicion that you had anything to do with the fire."

"I should say not," coincided the big miner, decidedly. "What do you say, boys?" appealing to the crowd surrounding them.

"Aye! aye! That's right," came from a dozen mouths.

"Yes, sir. I met these men, and they were hidin' in the bushes as I came along."

"What!" roared Wyse.

"The hidea!" said Gummitt, throwing up his hands.

"That's what you were, or I shouldn't have tumbled over you."

"You young villain!" began Wyse, but Marsh checked him. "You've had your say; now let the boy tell his story."

"That's only fair," said the big miner. "Spit it out, Fred."

"I went to Wilkesbarre to-night to see a friend of mine. On the way back I was waylaid by Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs, who tried to do me up in the wood, in revenge, I s'pose, for the lickin' I gave Moses last evenin'."

"And I'm goin' to lick you for doin' it," cried Wyse, in a threatening manner.

"You'd better not," interposed the big miner, significantly.

"What have you got to say about it?" demanded Jake, angrily.

"Well, you jest lay your hand on him and see. Your boy ought to be big and strong enough to take his own part. You jest keep out of it."

"Moses and Micky tried to down me with big chunks of coal," went on Fred. "Besides, Gibbs had a club and Moses a horsewhip. I waited till they came out into the road to

look for me and then I went for 'em both and laid 'em out myself. Then I saw the fire through the trees and started for it, tumblin' over Jake Wyse, as I said before. They grabbed me, and said they believed I had set fire to the cottage, and were goin' to turn me over to the constable, when I gave 'em the slip and came on here. That's the whole story, sir."

"And I believe you, my boy," said Marsh.

"You'd believe anythin' from that kid," said Wyse, with a sneer, "'cause yere stuck on him. Well, it ain't none of my bizness. It's your loss, and if yer willin' to stand for it, of course yer kin, I s'pose. Mebbe yer thinkin' of makin' a good thing out'r the insurance," maliciously.

"P'haps you'll explain why you were hidin' in the bushes so near this place when the fire started?" asked Marsh, significantly, for a strong suspicion against these two men was forming in his mind.

He understood how they regarded him.

"Who says we was hidin'?" demanded Wyse, with apparent indignation.

"You heard Fred King say so, didn't you?"

"He was lying to save himself."

"That's wot 'e was," backed up Gummitt.

"Well, I want both of you to understand I'm going to have this fire thoroughly investigated," said John Marsh, sternly. "I'm not sure but it will be a loss to me, as I haven't yet received my signed receipt for the coming year's premium, which I mailed to the company three days ago."

"What about the boy?" asked Constable Jinks.

"The lad is not to be arrested," said John Marsh, decidedly.

"Then I guess I'll go home again," said the village officer, and he walked off.

"I'm much obliged to you, neighbors all," said the engineer of the Black Diamond colliery, "for turning out and saving the larger part of my property."

"You're welcome, John Marsh," said the big miner, who constituted himself spokesman for the crowd, "for we all know you'd do the same for us."

"That I would," replied Marsh, heartily: "though I hope there will be no occasion, for fire is a dreadful thing, and not easily conquered once it gets a good hold."

Then the crowd broke up and went home in twos and threes, and the first to go were Jake Wyse and Gummitt, the tavern-keeper.

Next morning Jake Wyse appeared in the screen-room in a villainous humor.

The slate-pickers took warning from his appearance and avoided anything which might give their boss offense.

But it didn't avail them much.

He watched his slaves with the eye of a hawk, seemingly looking for an excuse to pitch into them.

As a matter of course he soon found the chance, and little Eddie Foster happened to be the first victim.

He rushed upon the little fellow and dealt him a severe blow with his blacksnake whip across the shoulders before he was aware of his approach.

Eddie cried aloud in pain, and all of the boys looked up with looks of unspoken sympathy for their companion.

This aroused Jake's anger to a fearful pitch and, with many oaths, he proceeded to ply the whip with impartial severity upon the others, thrashing every boy in the entire place in the most savage manner.

"You little imps!" he foamed at the mouth, "I'll make examples of every one of you before I've done."

While performing this task he seemed like a beast of prey more than a man.

He rushed around the screen-room in a rage, and seemed to revel in his brutal task.

The cries and frantic appeals for mercy only served to whet his appetite.

The little slaves now began to think he had actually gone mad, and regarded him with eyes full of horror.

He had always been a cruel tyrant, but never had he gone to such an extreme as on the present occasion.

At last he hit one of the biggest boys, a particular friend of Fred King's, over the head with his rawhide.

This lad, whose name was Billy Davis, smarting under the terrible blow, which for the moment drove him half wild with pain, seized a huge chunk of coal, and with it dealt the cracker boss a stunning blow on the head, inflicting a deep gash, from which the blood spurted freely and ran down his face.

The blow maddened Jake Wyse.

He rushed forward and seized Davis by the throat with

one hand, dragged him out on the floor, and began to rain blow upon blow upon his little body, till the rest of the lads, seeing he would certainly kill their comrade, attacked him from all sides.

Still holding on to his fainting victim, he plied the rawhide around him, striking the boys anywhere he could reach them, and with such good effect that they were obliged to draw off.

Then Wyse returned to the object in hand, and recommenced beating Davis.

Eddie Foster, in great terror, ran down and out of the building and almost into the arms of Fred King, who was crossing the yard at the time.

"Oh, oh!" gasped Eddie, in a paroxysm of excitement. "Save him! Save him!"

"What's the matter, Eddie?" asked Fred, holding the boy up.

"The boss is beatin' Billy Davis to death. Save him!"

Fred didn't wait to hear any more.

He knew what an ungovernable temper Wyse had when aroused.

Word had already reached the engine-room that Jake was in a fiendish humor that morning.

Then, too, Fred could hear the most heart-rending shrieks from the direction of the screen room.

He had been through the mill himself and sympathized with the little slate-pickers.

So, on the spur of the moment, he rushed up into the breaker, arriving there just as Jake, having whipped Billy almost into a state of insensibility, was about to bring the heavy handle down on the poor lad's head with the intention of finishing his cruel work.

With a cry of anger, Fred dashed forward and tore the rawhide from the cracker boss' hand.

CHAPTER VII.

FRED TAKES HIS FIRST STEP ON THE LADDER OF SUCCESS.

"What are you tryin' to do?" cried Fred, indignantly. "Kill the boy?"

Jake stood a moment glaring at the brave lad, then he flew at him, saying:

"I'll kill you!"

Fred threw the whip down into the "Lion's Mouth"—a yawning space in the room, to fall into which meant certain death—and stepped back with compressed lips.

There is little doubt but matters would have gone hard with King if Jake Wyse could have got his hands on the boy, and Fred realized that fact.

As Jake came at him like a raging lion, the boy quickly side-stepped, and thus avoided his clutch.

He didn't want to strike the man if he could possibly avoid it.

Wyse recovered himself and followed the boy up, trying to keep between him and the door.

At length he crowded him toward the chutes, and from the baleful look in his eyes it looked as if he meant to force the boy into one of the pockets.

In trying to avoid both this peril and the boss himself Fred tripped and fell over the outside chute.

This happened just as Jake made another rush, seeing the boy apparently in his power.

The result was Wyse himself fell over Fred's body and pitched forward into one of the pockets himself.

Fortunately for him it was full at the moment, and the coal stationary.

While he was scrambling to extricate himself, Fred took Billy Davis in his arms and hurriedly made his way out of the breaker.

He carried the boy into the engine-room, and while trying to revive him told John Marsh what had occurred, and how he had become involved in the trouble with Jake.

"You had better see the superintendent at once," advised the engineer, "before Wyse gets in the first word, or you may find yourself in trouble. It is a serious matter for a lad like you to interfere with the cracker boss."

"I believe he would have killed Davis but for me."

"Well, explain it all to the super, and I guess you won't hear anything more from it."

Fred took his advice and reported the incident at the office.

The superintendent came over and looked at Billy, who was in a pretty bad way.

He questioned him as to the cause of the trouble, and also had a talk with Eddie Foster.

Then he sent for Jake Wyse and asked for his explanation.

He saw the man was somewhat under the influence of drink, and after listening to his disjointed talk, gave him a call-down, and threatened to discharge him if such a thing occurred again.

A few minutes after the colliery closed for the day, Eddie Foster ran into the engine-room and handed an opened letter to Mr. Marsh.

"I found that on the floor of the screen-room," he said. "It was torn open, so I pulled the letter out and read it. As your name is signed to it, I guess it belongs to you."

It was John Marsh's brief note to the insurance company in Philadelphia, enclosing the money-order and unsigned receipt for the coming year's insurance on his cottage.

The engineer regarded it in dumb surprise for a moment or two.

"You say you found this in the screen-room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; I'm much obliged to you, Eddie, for bringing it to me."

The boy ran off home, while the engineer pondered over the circumstance, which meant the loss to him of the results of the previous night's fire, while it practically confirmed the strong suspicion he already had that Jake Wyse, assisted by the tavern-keeper, Gummitt, was at the bottom of a plot to ruin him.

Next day he called upon the superintendent of the colliery and had a talk with him.

Fred King was called into the conference, and asked to give his story of his meeting with Wyse and Gummitt in the by-lane.

While it was decided that the crime could not be brought home to the rascals, it seemed plain to the two men that Jake and the tavern-keeper were guilty.

As a result Wyse was discharged from the company's employ at the end of the current week, while Gummitt was visited by a committee, who quietly informed him that he would have to sell out and leave the village.

The night Fred visited his friend in Wilkesbarre he learned that a small farm a few miles from the Black Diamond colliery was for sale cheap.

The farmer had died recently, and his widow wanted to leave the State.

Fred, by great economy, had saved a couple of hundred dollars, which he had on deposit in the Miners' Bank in Wilkesbarre.

It was his great ambition to own a piece of good ground somewhere in the vicinity, so he took the first chance to call on the woman and see if he could do business with her.

She wanted \$800, claiming that the property was worth \$1,000 at least.

Finally she said she would take \$600 cash.

Fred had had the idea she might be willing to accept \$200 on account, and the balance in regular installments.

But she said she couldn't do that, as she wanted to get away.

So the boy gave the thing up as impossible for him to buy.

He mentioned the matter the next day to Mr. Marsh, and they had quite a talk about it.

The engineer sympathized with Fred's object.

He promised to go and see the property, and if it really was a bargain he thought likely the savings bank might be induced to advance the necessary \$400.

John Marsh was as good as his word.

He visited the farm, and being a good judge of the value of such land in that neighborhood, he saw that it was well worth buying.

"It will be a great inducement for Fred to persevere in his money-saving habit," he argued to himself, for he had the boy's best interests at heart, the more since he felt that his daughter Annie probably owed her life to his wit and bravery. "This place is worth every cent of \$1,000, if not more, and I doubt not after the bank has made its appraisal Fred will be able to borrow the sum he requires to purchase this property. In my opinion a young man cannot do better than invest his surplus earnings in real estate."

Mr. Marsh thought he owed it to Fred King to help him acquire the little farm.

So he put the ball in motion, and as soon as the bank reported favorably on the loan he had himself appointed Fred's legal guardian, and purchased the farm for the boy.

This was accomplished about thirty days after the fire

at the cottage, and Fred became the proud possessor of the Clover Farm on the Wilkesbarre road.

He had no difficulty in getting a tenant to work the place on shares, and this naturally would be a great help toward clearing himself eventually of the debt he had assumed.

Somehow it got out that Fred King, the engineer's assistant, had become a landowner, and many of the miners who knew the boy laughed at his attempt to make a start in life by means of a small farm which he could not work or live on himself.

"S'posin' I am at the foot of the ladder," said Fred to a group of these men one night after they had been badgering him upon the subject of his investment, "I hope to rise to the top some day. Others have done so, why not me?"

"Then you expect to be a rich man, eh?" laughed the big miner.

"I don't intend to be a poor one if I can help it," Fred retorted.

"Bravo, youngster," said one of the men with a grin. "But you won't never do it these days unless you have luck. Luck is everything. Wasn't it luck put these coal barons, as the newspapers call 'em, in possession of these mines? How could they pile up the fortunes they're getting if they didn't have luck? Tell me that. I haven't had any luck myself. I've managed at times to get up a step or two, but have always fallen down ere long, and now I've given up striving, for luck is against me."

"It's not so much luck as scheming," cried another with a flourish of his pipe. "The selfish schemer gets up while more honest folks remain at the foot."

"It's my opinion," argued a third, with a wise shake of his head, gray from years of underground labor, "that patronage does it all. You must get somebody to take you by the hand and help you up, or you'll have no chance. Ain't that how the manager of this mine got to the top of the ladder? I can remember when he warn't no better than me—now look at him."

Fred listened to the men, every one of them more than twice his age, and of ripened experience in their calling, but their words made no impression on his mind.

"Luck is all right in its way," he thought. "It's a good thing to be lucky. But a fellow would be a fool to wait for luck to come. He would be likely to starve before anything turned up. I believe a boy like me can make his own luck, by taking advantage of favorable circumstances, like the Clover Farm sale, for instance. I haven't any influential friend to take me by the hand and land me in the butter tub, so I have the more need to hustle for myself. If hard luck should come to me I mean to buck against it, and not sit down and chew the rag as some do, but persevere on to fortune. My purchase of the Clover Farm I look upon as my first real start in life. From this on I mean to branch out with every chance until some day I may be able to hold my head as high as the manager of the Black Diamond."

These were excellent resolutions for a boy of sixteen to make, and as our story proceeds we shall see how Fred King carried them out.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRAND OF CAIN RESTS FOR A MOMENT ON THE BROW OF MOSES WYSE.

Jake Wyse and Gummitt disappeared from the mining village on the same day, and as they were kindred spirits it was generally believed they had gone away together.

The Wyse family did not move away, however, and Moses continued to hold his job as a general helper in the company store.

Since the terrible whipping Fred had given him on the night of the fire he had hauled in his horns a bit, but he hated King a hundredfold more, and constantly longed for a chance to wreak revenge on him.

In this sentiment he was of course backed up by his cronies, Micky Gibbs, who earned a living as a mule-driver in the mines—a situation fraught with much danger and excitement.

Ever since Fred had been promoted to the engine-room he had, with the advice and encouragement of John Marsh, applied himself diligently to a course of study with the laudable view of rising above the disadvantageous circumstances which hitherto had handicapped him.

He made great progress, as he was ambitious to rise in life, and he felt that whatever success he achieved depended entirely on his own exertions.

About the only recreation he allowed him, aside from an occasional walk to Wilkesbarre of a Sunday afternoon, after he had attended Sunday-school in the little village church, as was his regular practice, was to go two evenings a week to a singing school with Annie Marsh.

It was not because the boy had a particularly musical voice, or that he took any great interest in training it, that induced him to go to the school.

Rather was it because he enjoyed Annie's society to and from the schoolhouse on the outskirts of the village where the exercises were held.

Sometimes he couldn't spare the time to accompany her to the school, but he never failed to be on hand to see her home.

Since the fire Annie had come to look on Fred with a much warmer feeling than before.

This was only natural since but for his exertions that night she believed she would have been burned to death.

She always felt disappointed whenever Fred failed to turn up in time to take her to the singing school.

But she was a sensible girl, and felt that her boy-chum had good reasons for not coming on time.

So she contented herself with the reflection that he surely would be on hand when the exercises were over and the class broke up.

On one of these occasions, however, when the boys and girls had donned their caps and hoods and rushed out hilariously into the unlighted road leading into the village, Fred King had not appeared, nor was he to be seen outside.

Annie Marsh stood on the steps in a state of some perplexity.

"What's the matter?" asked one of her girl companions, "hasn't your beau turned up?"

"I haven't any beau, thank you," replied Annie, spiritedly.

"Oh, my, what a fib!" laughed the girl. "Isn't Fred King your beau?"

"Certainly not," answered Annie, tossing her head.

"You never go 'round with any other boy."

"What of it? It doesn't follow he's my beau because he comes to singing school with me."

Whereupon there was a general laugh at Annie's expense.

"I guess Fred has given you the shake to-night," said one of the boys, with a grin.

"You'd better come along with us," advised another girl. "You can't think of waiting out in this lonely spot. He mightn't come at all."

"Yes, come along; we may meet him on the road."

That decided Annie, and she joined the party, expecting to see Fred loom up at any moment.

But Fred didn't appear, and when the party had thinned down to one couple besides Annie, they volunteered to see her to her parents' cottage.

The reason why Annie's escort failed to be on hand when the singing school broke up was because he had been detained at the house of the superintendent of the Black Diamond mine, where he had gone that evening in response to a request on the part of that official.

The superintendent had taken notice of Fred, had investigated his record in the company's employ, and an opportunity having occurred which he felt would lead to the boy's advancement in a direction he thought preferable to the engine-room, he had asked him to call at his house.

Fred called and had quite a talk with the superintendent.

He learned that the chief engineer of the company wanted a bright boy to accompany him and assist in making surveys of coal lands.

"I was talking to Mr. Marsh about you this afternoon," said the superintendent, whose name was Maxwell, "and he speaks very highly of you. His intention was to make an engineer of you eventually. From what I have learned about you, however, I should advise you to accept this opportunity to enter the chief engineer's office, as it will open wider possibilities for the talents and energy I believe you possess. What do you say?"

"As you think the change will be an advantage to me, sir, I will accept it with thanks. While I had made up my mind to become an engineer, I did not expect always to be one, if I found I was fitted for something better."

"I am glad to see you are ambitious. That is the keynote to success in life."

"I have no doubt it is, sir."

"We will consider the matter settled, then."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I will inform the chief engineer that he can call on you as soon as he is ready."

"How soon do you think I will leave the engine-room?"
"I think within a very few days, as Mr. Wesley is making his preparations now for another survey."

At this point the clock struck nine, and Fred recollected that the singing school closed at that hour.

"Will that be all?" he asked, rising and picking up his cap.

"Yes, I think so. If you will wait a moment I will go along with you a part of the way, as I have some business to transact at the office."

As the colliery office was on the road to the school, the boy waited, and a few minutes later he and the superintendent started out together.

It happened that the singing class broke up earlier than usual that night, and it also happened that when Fred and Mr. Maxwell reached the road along which they had to walk Annie Marsh and her companions had only just passed that spot, and consequently the boy missed her by perhaps a minute.

Unconscious of this circumstance, Fred, after parting from the superintendent at a cross-road leading to the colliery, kept straight on to his destination.

Of course he found the village schoolhouse, where the singing class held forth, closed and dark.

"Too bad," he muttered, much disappointed, especially as he had intended to tell Annie all about the new job which had come to him.

The night was dark, the sky being overcast with black clouds, which threatened a fall of rain.

The wind, too, had risen during the last half hour, causing the trees along the roads to nod toward him, as if they thought he had no right to be out there at that time of night.

"Of course somebody else had to see her home," he continued to himself, with a little twinge of jealousy as he fancied that somebody might be a boy. "I'll have to square myself somehow. I got here as soon as I could, anyway."

He turned around and began to retrace his steps.

He hadn't gone very far before he heard voices by the side of the road.

He looked keenly to the right and left ahead and presently saw the glow of a bright spark in the darkness, which vanished almost as quickly as it had appeared.

Almost immediately a match flared up, and he saw the faces of two boys as one of them lighted a cigarette.

And though the illumination had lasted but a moment or two, Fred recognized the youths.

They were Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs, sitting on a tree trunk beside the hedge.

Fred did not fear them in the least.

Nor did he imagine they would bother him on this occasion.

"They won't care to tackle me again in a hurry," he chuckled as he gradually neared the young rascals.

But that was where he made a slight mistake in his calculations.

Dark as the night was, their sharp eyes identified the figure of the boy they hated worse than anything else in this world.

"It's Fred King," said Moses in a hoarse whisper to his companion.

"I see it is," returned Micky, with a malevolent glitter in his eye. "Now's the chance for us to get square with him for what he done to us in the wood."

"I wish we could," said Moses through his teeth, but he had his doubts, like all cowards, when the pinch came.

"Why not?" responded Micky, looking scornfully at his crony. "Ain't yer game to do it after the way he done yer up with yer own whip?"

"Yah!" snarled Moses, as the unpleasant recollection recurred to him. "If I had a gun I'd shoot him."

"Would yer?" sneered Micky, eagerly. "Wot's the matter with takin' mine?"

The young mule driver pulled out an old pistol from his hip pocket.

"Here yer are—now take aim at him and let him have it."

But Moses hung back.

"Afraid, are yer?" and his unpleasant laugh reached Fred's ear, for he was now almost abreast of them. "There, I've cocked it for yer. All yer have to do is to pull the trigger."

Still Moses hesitated.

He had it in his heart to do the trick, but his nerve failed him.

"Take hold of it, can't yer?" growled Micky, pushing the

weapon into his companion's hand. "Are yer goin' to let him get away?" as Fred passed a couple of yards away.

Moses' hand shook as he made an attempt to raise the revolver in the desperation of the moment.

Evidently he wasn't equal to the crime.

"Uh! You coward!" snorted Micky, angrily, giving his arm a jerk upward.

A loud report followed, and when the smoke cleared Fred King was seen lying all of a heap in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER IX.

FRED IS IMPRISONED IN THE CELLAR OF THE OLD DUTCH MILL.

"Now yer done it," jeered Micky Gibbs, who was a thoroughly bad youth from his boots up. "Yer've killed him. I didn't think yer had the nerve."

"I didn't," protested Moses, his face white with terror. "You done it."

"Me!" retorted Micky, with a wicked chuckle. "Ho, ho! I like that. Ain't yer got the gun in yer hand wot done it?" Moses dropped the revolver as if it were a live coal.

"You knocked up my hand and made me do it," gasped Moses, his teeth chattering from fright, while his eyes almost started from their sockets.

"Bah! Yer make me sick!" said Micky. "If he's dead yer killed him. I kin swear to it."

"You won't tell on me, will you?" whimpered Moses. "I'll be sent to jail and hanged."

"What'll I tell on yer fer? Don't be a fool. I'd only git into trouble meself. Come on, let's look at him."

"I'm afraid. Oh, I hope he ain't dead."

Micky Gibbs looked down on his cowardly associate with the utmost scorn.

"Yer a nice one, you are. A little while ago yer was jest achin' for a chance to do him, and now yer've done it yer shiverin' and shakin' like a jelly-fish. Yer give me a pain."

"It's awful to think you've killed a person," wailed Moses in terror.

Not that he felt sorry for Fred King, but rather for himself, for he dreaded the consequences of such a deed.

Micky had a more calloused conscience; besides he didn't consider himself responsible for the crime.

He didn't hold the revolver nor pull the trigger.

Leaving Moses to commune with himself he walked over to the motionless figure that lay in the road and gazed down at it.

A thin stream of blood was welling from a slight wound over Fred's ear, and running down under his collar.

"I don't believe he's dead for a cent," muttered young Gibbs.

He bent down and, pulling open the stricken boy's shirt, felt over the region of the heart.

"Naw! It's beatin' all right. He ain't dead no more'n me."

He dragged the unconscious boy into the grass to one side and reported the facts to Moses.

"He's only stunned, that's all."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Moses eagerly.

"Sure thing. Go an' see for yourself."

It was some moments before Moses Wyse could muster up the courage to do it.

"No, he ain't dead," he said with an air of relief. "It's lucky for me he ain't."

"Wot are we goin' to do with him? Leave him here?" asked Micky.

Moses pondered a moment.

"Do you think he's much hurt?" he asked.

"Naw. He'll come to in a little while."

"And be as good as ever?"

"Sure he will."

This assurance comforted Moses, but in like proportion his hate for Fred King reasserted itself.

The boy's death would have been a great satisfaction to him if somebody other than himself was responsible for it.

He hated to see his enemy, as he looked upon Fred, escape so easily after all.

"Now we've got him dead to rights, we can fix him in another way," he said.

"How?" inquired Micky.

"Let's carry him down to the Dutch Mill."

"What, that old deserted shack?"

"Yep."

"Wot fur?"

"So's to keep him out'r the way. We kin tie him in the cellar."

"I guess we kin do it. Then we kin come back to-morrer with a whip an' give him a lickin'."

The idea of applying a rawhide to the defenseless person of Fred King just suited Moses Wyse's ideas of retaliation for the whipping Fred had administered to him the night of the fire.

So they picked up the unconscious boy between them and started off through various by-lanes with which they were thoroughly familiar until they came out into the open country south of the village.

Over this they progressed slowly, taking frequent rests, until the old Dutch mill, long since out of commission, loomed up before them.

The stream which once upon a time had furnished power to turn the rotting moss-grown wheel was now but a mere rivulet, though in the spring it expanded to a stream of some size.

The base of the structure, comprising the cellar, was constructed of stone, while the two stories above were of wood, bearing the stains and scars of many a storm.

Moses and Micky carried their burden into the ground floor, which consisted of one big room, beneath the floor of which ran the stout shaft, to the outside end of which was suspended the water-wheel.

A trapdoor at one end led to the depths below.

"He's comin' to his senses," said Micky when they placed Fred upon the floor. "We must get him down below right away."

That the old mill was not unfamiliar as a stamping ground to the young rascals was apparent when Micky went to a hole in one of the walls and pulled out a lantern and a stout piece of rope, together with a box of matches.

He lighted the lantern, then went over and threw up the trap.

There was a hook underneath the floor within reach, to which he hung the lantern.

Then he and Moses grabbed up their victim again and carried him down into the cellar.

They propped him up on a box against a post in the center of the place, to which they tied him as they thought securely.

The desire to gloat over the boy they hated induced Micky to get a pan of water and dash the greater part of it in Fred's face.

This produced the desired effect.

King opened his eyes with a long drawn sigh and looked about in a confused way.

"Where the dickens am I?" he said loud enough for his two enemies to hear.

They chuckled in great glee as they noticed the look of perplexity on his face.

Then he became conscious of their presence for the first time, and recognized them even in the dim light furnished by the lantern.

"What game are you fellows up to now? Where have you brought me to? You must have knocked me out in some cowardly fashion to get the best of me."

"We've got you where we want you now," said Moses with a triumphant grin.

"What do you mean to do? You've tied me so I can't get back at you, you cowards! Well, it's a long lane that hasn't a turning. If you dare to ill treat me I'll do you both up worse than I did a month ago."

"I don't think," sneered Micky. "It's our turn now, and Moses is goin' to make you dance to the same music yer treated him to. He's goin' to lick yer till yer tongue hangs out. The crack over the sconce yer give me I'll call square, as yer got a wuss one yerself to-night."

Fred was beginning to realize that something was the matter with his head.

It throbbed and pained him a good deal.

"Then I s'pose you rascals crept up behind me to-night and struck me down?" he said angrily, for he entertained a proper contempt for all acts of treachery.

"No matter how we done it, you went down all right," jeered Moses.

"You two must be fools if you think you can do anything to me and not get it back again with interest."

"We'll take the chances of that," grinned Micky. "Yer ain't so much after all."

"I'm goin' to lick you with a rawhide till I draw blood from you if I die for it," said Moses with vindictive earnestness. "I hate you wuss than anythin' in the world."

"If you dare carry out your threat I promise you I'll make you wish you were dead yourself."

The fearless look Fred gave him made him uneasy, and he

began to entertain some misgivings as to the ultimate outcome of the affair.

He hadn't by any means forgotten the dressing down Fred had given him, and though the thought of it nerved him on to revenge, still he shivered to think that he was, perhaps, inviting a repetition of that punishment.

"Don't mind him," said Micky. "Come along. He won't feel so cocky after he's spent a night in this ranch."

Moses was ready to go, so the two boys returned to the floor above, taking the lantern with them and thus leaving Fred in the darkness of the old mill cellar.

CHAPTER X.

A BASE PLOT.

"I wonder if those scamps really mean to keep me in this place all night," mused Fred. "If they do they'll wish they hadn't done so," he added, bringing his teeth together with a snap which boded no good for Micky and Moses, who, by this time, had left the old mill and were on their way to their homes, chuckling over the success of their night's work.

"Whichever one of them hit me to-night fetched me a good rap by the way my head feels. I don't see how they did it, but there isn't any doubt of the fact. I was unconscious long enough for them to carry me here, whatever place it is—a cellar, I judge."

From which it would appear that Fred had no idea he had been shot, but rather it was his belief he had been downed by a club.

It is bad enough to be tied up in a lonesome cellar without the additional torment of a wounded head, so the reader may have some slight idea of what Fred went through in the next hour.

During this time there were no indications of the return of the little miscreants, therefore King came to the conclusion that they really intended to leave him there all night.

"I guess I can stand it," he muttered. "All the same I shan't stay if I can manage to slip these bonds and make my way out. Then look out, Mose Wyse and Micky Gibbs!"

Moses and his crony in tying Fred to the post had passed the short piece of rope twice around his body over his arms, and then once around his wrists, jamming the latter against the wood.

The job was not an expert one.

Still it would have held any one who was easily discouraged when his first efforts to free himself met with little success.

Fred King, however, was not built that way.

He resolved to get clear if it took him the rest of the night.

And he brought the same aggressiveness and perseverance to bear on his bonds that he was accustomed to expend on his daily labor and his studies, and, in fact, anything he undertook to accomplish.

This is one of the secrets of success in life.

When you have a task before you which looks difficult, don't get discouraged if, after you make a start, things don't seem to come your way.

Go at it with a vim and keep at it—you'll find it will only be a question of time and patience before you get there.

Whatever is worth while is worth the effort.

You probably remember the old saying: "If at first you don't succeed, try again."

True grit and perseverance brought all our successful men to the front, and what they did most of our boys are capable of doing.

Fred simply made up his mind that that rope wasn't going to hold him a prisoner, and it didn't, though it took him full two hours to free himself of it.

It took that time to work his hands clear, and the rest was easy.

The first thing he did was to feel his head where the blood had dried on the wound.

It was a mighty sore spot, and the pain caused him to register a vow of reprisal against Moses and Micky.

"It takes a lot of thumping to put sense into some people, but I guess I'm equal to the emergency. The hiding I gave Moses would satisfy most boys for a long time, but I guess he got so much of it from his father, who had that sort of thing down to a fine art, that it failed to have the proper effect. We'll see what another dose will do."

Fred got up, found a match in his pocket and struck a light on the situation.

"Gee! This is a cellar, all right, and a pretty musty one. These steps lead to a trap-door. If it isn't fastened on the other side there's nothing to prevent me from getting out.

Hello! What's that? There's somebody walking overhead. Sounds like more than one person."

Clearly a couple of men were crossing the floor above.

The noise didn't last, but the creaking sound which followed seemed to indicate that the individuals in question were ascending a rickety stairway.

Then there was silence as complete as before.

Fred waited five minutes before he tried the trap-door and found that it was not secured.

"This is easy," he laughed softly, as he stepped out of the cellar and let the trap gently back into place.

He could dimly make out the open doorway, then he became aware that it was raining hard.

Peering through the entrance he could see nothing but intense darkness.

He couldn't get the slightest clew as to where he was.

That he was in the old Dutch mill, more than a mile on the outskirts of the village, was the last thing which would have occurred to him.

But when he cautiously lit a match and looked about the room he recognized his surroundings, for this wasn't the first time he had been in the old ruin.

"Gee! So they took all the trouble of bringing me out here, a mile and a half from the school-house road. It looks as if they intend to keep me prisoner a while. No one would think of looking for me at this place. They're a foxy pair."

Just then he heard the sound of a heavy pair of boots on the floor above.

"I wonder who those men are who went upstairs a few minutes ago?" mused Fred. "I can't see what business anybody has in this building. If they came here merely to escape the rain they wouldn't bother climbing to the loft."

Fred's curiosity was excited, and as he didn't propose to start for home till the rain let up he resolved to creep up the stairs and see who the intruders were.

He took off his shoes and made his way to the loft as noiselessly as possible.

The second floor of the mill was divided by a rough partition into two compartments of about equal size.

One of these had a door which was closed, the other looked dark and uninviting.

The sound of voices proceeded from behind the door.

Fred saw a gleam of light flashing through what he judged to be a knothole in the partition; but to reach it he would have to walk some little distance into the dark room.

He found he had another match in his pocket, and he softly lit it on his trousers before venturing into the gloomy space beyond, since he could not tell what obstruction he might run against in the blackness.

The momentary glare of the match showed that the compartment was entirely bare of anything but an accumulation of dust and cobwebs, so he entered and tiptoed his way to the knothole, an opening as large as the palm of his hand.

Two men were squatting on the dirty floor near the center of the room with an overturned box between them on which was spread a page of daily paper and the remains of a cold repast, which they were devouring with great relish.

A piece of candle stuck into the neck of a whisky bottle furnished illumination.

Fred recognized the two individuals with a start of surprise.

They were Jake Wyse and Gummitt, and both looked as if circumstances were not running in their favor.

"You're sure the money his hin the safe?" Gummitt was saying.

"Sure. To-morrer is payday. The cashier always brings the cash from Wilkesbarre the afternoon before."

"Then we'll make a big 'aul. Hi ain't cracked a crib since Hi left the hold country, but Hi know the ropes as well as never."

He reached his hand behind him and brought into view a bag, which gave forth a rattling sound.

"'Ere are the beanties wot'll whistle hopen hany Hamericen safe as was never made. They belong to a pal Hi run across in Wilkesbarre. 'E's laid hup with the rheumatiz or Hi'd 'ave awsked 'im to join hus."

"You've got a complete outfit for safe-breaking, have you?" responded Jake, with a greedy glance at the canvas bag.

"Hi 'ave."

"And so you're an expert at the bus'ness."

"Hi ham."

"How came you to leave England?" asked Wyse with some curiosity.

"Hit got too 'ot for me hover there, so Hi took me hold 'ooman hand me lawst money hand crossed the hocean."

"Did you try your hand on this side?"

"Honky once, hand was sent hup for seven years. When Hi got out Hi came 'ere hand hopen the 'Miner's Retreat.' Hi meant to try the honest lay, but Hi've been driven hout, hand me hold 'ooman 'as shook me."

"Well, if you can break into the safe at the office of the Black Diamond colliery we'll be fixed for life, and I shall have revenge for my discharge."

"'Ow habout the watchman?" asked Gummitt, with professional caution.

"I'll answer for him, while you attend to your part."

"Hall right. Your hold 'ooman knows 'ow to make a meat pie hall right," said Gummitt, smacking his lips over the last crust.

"That's what she does. Have you any tobacco?"

"Hi 'ave," and Gummitt produced part of a bag of fine cut. Both men lighted their pipes and then went into the details of the job they had on hand.

Fred listened attentively to their conversation, since it was his duty to be fully prepared to frustrate their criminal intentions.

They arranged to begin operations in the early hours of the morning.

It was now past midnight.

"I guess it's stopped rainin'," said Jake at last; "we may as well be on the move."

"Hi'm willin'," agreed Gummitt, getting on his legs.

It had been Fred's intention to get away first and make his way as fast as he could to the house of Constable Jinks, but he saw that this would be a dangerous move, so he resolved to wait till the rascals had left the mill.

Jake blew out the light, Gummitt took up his bag of tools, and the twain walked out of the next compartment and so on downstairs, the ancient steps shivering and groaning under their heavy tread.

Fred crept as far as the head of the stairs and listened so that he might be certain when they had gone.

However, they did not leave the lower floor immediately.

They filled and lit their pipes once more, and loitered about the door, smoking for a good twenty minutes before they ventured forth.

Fred waited all of ten minutes after they had stepped outside, to make sure they were not still around somewhere, and then he started down.

He had only taken two or three steps when, without the slightest warning, the old stairway suddenly collapsed beneath him.

He was precipitated head foremost to the floor below with a shock which stretched him out stunned and bleeding.

CHAPTER XI.

JAKE WYSE AND GUMMITT GET AWAY WITH THE "SWAG."

For two hours Fred King lay insensible on the floor of the old mill.

The rain clouds had passed away and the moon was shining like a big cheese in the sky.

The wind had fined down to a soft zephyr which kissed without disturbing the glistening raindrops hanging pendant from the trees and shrubbery.

Then it was that the boy began to move upon the hard planks, and presently he sat up with the indefinite feeling of one awakening from a dream.

For the second time within a few hours he asked himself where was he.

And it was several minutes before recollection asserted itself and the events of the night rushed upon his mind.

"By George!" he ejaculated, "I remember now, I started to come downstairs after those rascals, and then something happened. What was it?"

He staggered to his feet and felt his head.

The concussion had re-opened the pistol-shot wound at the time, but that had dried again after another flow of blood.

"I'm up against it to-night for fair," he muttered.

Then he observed the ruins of the stairway which lay all about him, for now that the moon shone objects could be clearly distinguished in the room, and the cause of his mishap was plain.

"I certainly had a nasty fall. It's lucky I didn't break my neck. It's better to have been born lucky than rich."

He felt kind of shaky on his legs, but the recollection of the contemplated burglary at the office of the Black Diamond colliery acted as a spur to his benumbed energies.

"Good gracious! I wonder how long I was unconscious?"

This was a poser.

Walking outside he looked up at the moon as if he thought he could tell the hour by its position in the sky.

But he couldn't.

"Those fellows have a big start on me I'm afraid. Well, I'll hurry along to Constable Jinks'. I don't believe those rascals will be able to open that safe very quickly. It'll be hard luck if we don't catch them in the act."

It took thirty minutes for Fred to reach Constable Jinks' cottage, and nearly ten more before he managed to arouse the inmates.

"What's the matter?" asked the voice of Mrs. Jinks, as she poked her night-capped head out of an upper window.

"I want to see Mr. Jinks."

"He's asleep. Do you know what hour it is, young man?" she said with some asperity.

"About twelve o'clock, isn't it?" asked Fred, anxiously.

"Twelve o'clock!" exclaimed the good lady sarcastically. "Nearer three."

"What!" gasped the boy. "So late as that?"

"Late! Early in the morning, you mean."

"Good gracious! I'm afraid I'm too late, then."

"Too late! What do you mean?"

"I mean there's a plot under way to break into the office of the Black Diamond colliery and open the safe for the money that's known to be there. I wish you'd tell Mr. Jinks about it, and say I overheard the scheme, and he ought to get up and come with me to the superintendent's house."

With an exclamation Mrs. Jinks' head vanished and presently was replaced by the rubicund visage of the constable himself.

"What's this about a robbery at the Black Diamond office?" he asked, sleepily.

"Please dress yourself as quickly as possible. I'll tell you all about it as we go along."

"But—but—" sputtered the constable, who didn't relish the idea of leaving his warm bed at that hour.

"There isn't a moment to be lost if we're going to catch the thieves," cried Fred, impatiently.

"Well, well, I'll be down in a moment," the officer said, testily, as he closed the window with a bang.

Fred thought Mr. Jinks took a long time to get into his clothes, and he was beginning to feel uneasy over the outcome of the affair, when Jinks appeared with his coat on his arm.

"Now let me hear all about it," he said after he recognized his early caller.

Fred told his story, which duly astonished the guardian of the mining village, as they walked rapidly toward the superintendent's cottage.

It didn't take one-third as long to arouse Mr. Maxwell, and bring him outside fully prepared for business, as it had the constable.

He was a man of action, and his active mind grasped the meaning of Fred's words in a twinkling.

"We must arouse the new cracker boss on our way, and one or two others. These rascals won't be captured without a struggle, I dare say. I am hardly surprised to learn that Jake Wyse is mixed up in this. His record is none too good. It's pretty certain it was he and Gummitt set fire to Mr. Marsh's cottage. If we only could have brought it home to them we could have put both of them behind the bars, where they evidently belong. I hope we'll nail them now. It will be ten years at least for the scoundrels."

By this time they were pounding on the door of the cottage where lived the new foreman of the screen-room, and five minutes sufficed to get him outside.

Mr. Maxwell then aroused a couple of the yard men.

The superintendent and the constable were provided with their revolvers.

The others, including Fred, were expected to rely on nature's weapons—their fists.

As they hurriedly drew near the Black Diamond colliery buildings, they saw a light shining from one of the office windows.

"I guess we're in time," cried Fred, joyfully, for up to that moment his mind had been filled with doubts as to whether they would be in time to head off the ruffians.

The superintendent halted his little band and explained the tactics he intended to put in practice.

Then they advanced again with due caution.

Drawing close to the office window Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Jinks peered through the glass.

The stout safe was in full view with the gas jet burning dimly above it as was the usual custom.

But its ponderous door had been blown open by a charge of dynamite, and the carpeted floor in front was littered with papers and miscellaneous documents discarded by the thieves as of no value to them.

There was no sign of the rascals who had wrought the damage.

"We are too late!" exclaimed the superintendent in a voice of dismayed concern. "The villains have succeeded in getting away with their booty. There was over \$20,000 in that safe."

While the others started to enter the office Fred made a break for the rear of the building.

Why he did so he couldn't have explained even to his own satisfaction.

It was an impulse of the moment that he acted upon.

As he came around on the other side of the office he almost ran into a man's arms.

It was Gummitt, who uttered an oath and started to run. Fred recognized him and was on his heels like a flash.

"Stop, you thief!" he cried, shrilly.

Gummitt, seeing he was at a disadvantage, dashed his canvas bag of tools full in the boy's face.

Fred was staggered and went down on his hands and knees.

As he staggered to his feet he saw both Gummitt and Jake Wyse vanishing around the corner of an outbuilding.

Shouting loudly to alarm the rest of the party Fred started in full chase after the rascals.

CHAPTER XII.

FRED RECOVERS THE STOLEN MONEY AND IS FITTINGLY REWARDED BY THE COMPANY.

Jake Wyse and Gummitt scooted for all they were worth.

The former carried a small hand-satchel in which was stowed the stolen money, and he hung on to it like grim death.

They skirted the different buildings until they struck a lane leading into the Wilkesbarre road.

Fred King gained rapidly on them.

The boy was determined they should not escape.

They reached the turn of the road first, however, and disappeared.

Then they stopped, crouching down and lay in wait for their pursuer, for they knew they couldn't elude him by trusting entirely to their legs.

Fred came on at full speed, never dreaming of the trap awaiting him.

At the critical moment Gummitt shot out his foot and Fred tripped and pitched forward like a stone from a catapult, landing several feet away in the middle of the road.

There he lay half stunned by the shock, while Gummitt and his companion started off toward Wilkesbarre at a rapid trot.

Fortunately Fred was not much hurt by the fall, though it was the third severe layout he had since nine o'clock of the night before.

He pulled himself together and started to track the rascals to the city, for which he knew they were bound.

He had gathered from their conversation in the loft of the old mill about what section of Wilkesbarre they would aim for, and laid his plans accordingly.

"I'm not going to let those fellows get the best of me if I can help myself," he muttered sturdily to himself. "Neither am I going to follow them through the wood, where the pair of them could lay for me among the trees and polish me off in great shape. No, sir-ee, bob! I mean to reach the city first and put the police on to them."

By the road Wilkesbarre was six miles away.

But by taking advantage of various short cuts familiar to him, Fred could reduce that distance by one-third.

Upon that plan he acted.

Although his head ached as if it would split open, and his blood coursed through his veins at fever pitch, the boy brought all of his indomitable energy to the fore, fully determined to win out.

How many boys would have shown such grit under the circumstances?

Yet the lives of all our successful men show examples of it.

Day was breaking when Fred, covered with dust and perspiration, his wounded head swollen and inflamed, reached the outskirts of Wilkesbarre.

He had no idea where he might find a police station, but he hoped to run across an officer in the streets.

His enthusiastic project for capturing Wyse and Gummitt had pictured an officer waiting for him at the first corner.

But we are afraid his brilliant scheme would have sadly miscarried, and the thieves would have easily eluded him, but for the fact that Superintendent Maxwell had notified the Wilkesbarre police of the robbery and flight of the miscreants by telephone, and half a dozen of the force were patrolling the outskirts on the lookout for the rascals.

Fred ran against one of these men and was immediately taken in charge as a suspect.

He was hustled off to the nearest station.

He tried to explain matters to the policeman, but his appearance was against him.

At the station he was subjected to a searching examination, and his earnest demeanor and straightforward answers created a favorable impression.

He insisted that he believed he could lead the officers in the right direction, and that delay was likely to prove of advantage to the thieves.

The officer in charge appreciated this idea, and he instructed two of his best men to go with Fred, but they were cautioned to keep their eyes on him.

He piloted them toward the neighborhood through which he believed the rascals would pass.

It was near the point where the Wilkesbarre road merged itself into the city limits.

A region of factories and tenements.

One of the officers stepped into a convenient doorway on the street, while the other, with Fred, entered a by-lane and stood in the shadow of a big factory.

The rising sun was just beginning to gild the eastern sky with its preliminary glow when Fred clutched the policeman by the arm and whispered:

"Here they come."

The officer looked at the advancing figures and saw they tallied with the lad's description given at the police station.

Jake Wyse had the grip in his hand, while Gummitt, with a false mustache adjusted, had his hands in his pockets.

They were taking things easy, as if satisfied they had eluded pursuit for the time being at least.

But their sharp eyes were on the alert just the same.

As they entered the lane Gummitt noticed the outline of the policeman in the shadow of the factory door, and he stopped suddenly, grasped Jake by the arm and said something to him.

Wyse gave a start, then they turned around and took the other street.

Bidding Fred follow him, the officer started on a run after the rascally pair.

Fred, however, didn't obey, but decided to head the men off by cutting through an adjacent alley.

It was a lucky move, as the sequel will show.

As Jake and Gummitt passed rapidly up the street, the other officer, from his post in the doorway, identified them and walked out to head them off.

The two thieves, now on their guard, dashed past him at full speed as the steps of the second officer, the one who had been with Fred, sounded on the walk behind.

It was the most natural thing in the world for them to take the first turn they came to, which was the alley Fred was aiming for.

He reached it just as Gummitt flew by with his companion close behind.

The boy sprang forward and made a grasp for Jake.

"You will, will you?" snarled Wyse, recognizing Fred on the instant, and striking viciously at him.

The boy ducked nimbly and tackled the ruffian low down, football fashion.

The consequence was the fellow lost his balance and measured his length upon the ground, while the valise, containing the stolen property, went flying several feet away.

"Hang you! Let me go!" gritted Wyse, as he tried to rise.

"Not on your life," answered Fred, gripping him harder.

"I'll kill you for this!" roared Jake, making ineffectual efforts to kick himself free.

But the game was up for him, for the foremost officer rushed up and had a pair of handcuffs on his prisoner in a twinkling.

Then Fred let go his hold on Jake's leg and hastened to secure the precious valise.

By the time the second policeman came up Gummitt was out of sight.

"I've got the money," cried the boy triumphantly, and then the excitement and culmination of his plucky efforts proved

too much for his young nerves at last, and he fell in a dead faint, the officer catching him in his arms.

While Fred was being revived in a neighboring saloon, Wyse was led off to the station, the officer carrying the valise, and it wasn't very long before the telephone to the Black Diamond colliery was telling the story of the capture of one of the thieves and the recovery of the stolen money.

As soon as Fred was able to walk he was taken to Police Headquarters, where he was attended to by the surgeon of the department.

Then he was taken to a near-by restaurant and treated to a good breakfast.

"I feel like a new boy now," he remarked to the officer in charge of the desk when he came back to await the arrival of Superintendent Maxwell.

"He's a plucky young fellow," remarked the superintendent to the chief of police a little later.

"He looks like it. The capture of the man who carried the money was actually made by him, owing to his foresight in taking to the alley instead of following the officer he was with."

"As it's a matter of \$20,000 the company is certain to reward him handsomely," intimated Mr. Maxwell.

"He deserves whatever the directors of your company may think fit to present him. He told me the whole story of his night's adventure before you came, and I am bound to say his vitality and pluck are most remarkable."

On the way back to the village in Mr. Maxwell's buggy Fred rehearsed his strenuous experiences of the last twelve hours, and some days later repeated them before the board of directors of the Black Diamond colliery.

He was highly commended for his conduct, and the board unanimously voted him a reward of \$1,000, which was paid to him the same day in the form of a check.

The next morning his successor in the engine-room took his place and Fred reported at the office of the chief engineer, prepared to take up his new duties.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOSES WYSE HAS A SCHEME TO DO UP FRED KING.

Gummitt was not caught, so it was presumed he had escaped from the State, and probably had gone to Canada.

Jack Wyse was duly tried, and, largely on Fred's evidence and his past record, got the maximum penalty, and was sent to the State prison.

Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs kept very shady whenever Fred was within reach of them, and the lad concluded to let them alone as long as they didn't bother him.

Fred liked his new position under the chief very much indeed.

He had a better opportunity to study and improve his mind.

The rough diamond qualities had begun to wear off from the day he was emancipated from the screen-room of the breaker, and the polish had commenced to show itself little by little after he was introduced to the engine-room, from which time he saw much more of the John Marsh family and began to associate with a better grade of the village society.

Now the polish was coming on more rapidly, the superior qualities of his mind and the energy of the character asserting themselves.

"He is a remarkable boy," said Chief-Engineer Wesley to Superintendent Maxwell one day a few months after Fred had come under his jurisdiction. "He is bright, attentive and smart, and dutiful almost to a fault. I like him very much."

"I believe you," replied Mr. Maxwell. "One would scarcely think, to look at him now, that a few years ago he was an apparently ignorant little slate picker. Why, six months ago he bought the twenty-acre Clover farm for \$600, paying \$200 down, his savings to that date, and giving a mortgage for the balance. The place is easily worth to-day \$1,200. Mr. Marsh is acting as his guardian."

"You surprise me," said the chief engineer. "Take my word for it, that boy is going to make his mark."

One day Fred was in Wilkesbarre and accidentally came across a sale of horses.

He was very fond of animals, and one of his ambitious hobbies was to become the owner of a good horse.

A very handsome looking mare was put up while he was looking on.

The auctioneer explained that she was afflicted with some disease of the eye, which was apparent to the onlookers, but he did not dwell much on the fact, as a matter of course, but devoted his oratory to calling attention to the animal's other good qualities.

Many would-be purchasers examined the mare with much interest, but the eye trouble deterred them from bidding.

Finally the auctioneer offered her for \$50, but nobody took him up.

Then he reduced the price to \$40 without success, and the mare was about to be taken back to her stall when Fred impulsively shouted:

"I'll give you \$35."

"She's yours, young man."

Fred had only a \$5 bill with him, and paid that on account, while he hastened to the mining village to get his bank book.

As soon as he could get back to Wilkesbarre he drew the necessary funds and took charge of the mare.

Then he consulted the stable veterinary surgeon.

"The animal has got an incurable cataract of the eye," replied that person very frankly.

"Will she become blind, do you think?"

"In time, yes."

Fred asked no more questions on the subject, but took his purchase back with him, and left her at Clover farm.

"I may have made a poor investment," he said to himself; "but I don't care, I like that horse."

Fred thought the matter over for a week, and finally got books treating about the human eye as well as the diseases of horses, and studied the subject carefully.

Finally he decided to treat the mare himself.

"It is possible the veterinary doctor was mistaken. At any rate I'm going to do something for the horse myself."

He tried several remedies without result, but at length hit upon one which had been notably successful with the human eye.

As a matter of fact the mare was not afflicted with a real cataract, though she had many of the symptoms of the disease.

Fred's perseverance and gentle care triumphed, and the animal was completely cured in four months.

In due course of time a fine colt was added to Fred's possessions.

The animal was scarcely three months old when the boy was offered \$3,000 for him, but refused to sell.

Fred was now eighteen years old, and had advanced several steps upward in the chief engineer's office.

Mr. Wesley put a great deal of confidence in him, for his work was strictly accurate and well done, and, therefore, could be relied on.

Although he had had no actual collision with either Moses Wyse or Micky Gibbs for more than a year, those worthies had it in for him just the same.

On the principle that all things come to him who waits, they were lying on their oars, so to speak, hoping, if not actually watching, for a chance to get back at him.

Annie Marsh had developed into a very charming young miss of seventeen.

Many of the villagers were of the opinion that in time she would be the most beautiful woman in the Wyoming Valley.

Fred had always admired her in his way.

Now he was prouder than ever to be seen in her society.

Occasionally on a Sunday he took her out riding, and once in a while he would induce her to take a sail with him in a small catboat, the property of Mr. Wesley, on the delightful Susquehanna.

"I shall be off duty to-morrow afternoon," he said to her one Friday evening as they stood talking at the corner of the lane leading to her home. "I wish you'd take a sail with me."

It was dusk and they stood quite close together in the shadow of the hedge.

"Well," she replied, a little bit coquettishly, "are you really so very anxious for me to go?"

"Oh, come now, Annie, you know I am," he said, earnestly.

"I'll think about it," she said, flashing a saucy glance at him.

"Then you won't give me a decided answer?" he said in a disappointed tone.

"I must ask mother," she replied demurely.

"You know she won't object," persisted Fred.

"Well," answered the girl, coyly, after a pause, "if it's a very pleasant afternoon—"

"You'll go," interjected Fred eagerly.

"I didn't say so," she replied archly.

"But that's what you were going to say, wasn't it?"

"Who gave you permission to catechise me?" she asked laughingly.

"Oh, pshaw, Annie! You're in a teasing humor to-night. Come now, be reasonable. You're going, of course?"

"I presume you won't give me any rest till I say yes. You're the most persevering boy I ever met."

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are. Now are you satisfied?"

"I ought to be. I'll call for you at three."

"I will look for you at that hour."

Then the young people continued their walk to the cottage, where Fred was invited to take supper.

They had scarcely turned their backs on the hedge before a sallow, freckled face, in which a physiognomist would hardly have found a redeeming feature, was thrust, through the leaves and twigs, and the small, wicked-looking eyes followed the retreating forms of the boy and girl up the lane.

It was Moses Wyse, not much different than when we saw him last in the cellar of the old mill, but more than a year older.

A second face popped up over his shoulder which could never be mistaken for any one but Micky Gibbs.

Micky was still a mule driver in the mines, and his ambition was fully satisfied with the post, for he could beat the dumb beasts to his heart's content without fear of retaliation on their part.

He often boasted that he had put a half dozen of them out of commission, and we have no doubt but that he spoke the truth.

"He's goin' to take his gal on the river ter-morrer, did you hear that, Micky?"

"D'ye t'ink I'm deaf?" replied his crony, ejecting a squirt of tobacco juice into the lane.

"We've been wantin' to git square with him for a good while, ain't we?"

"Sure t'ing. Ef ye'd more backbone we'd 'r done it, too, long ago."

"I'm thinkin' we have a chance now," said Moses mysteriously.

"Let's hear about it, then," asked Micky with some curiosity.

"He's goin' to use Wesley's boat."

"Wot ef he is?"

"We could go down to the boat-house to-night, break into the place, and with an auger bore half a dozen holes in the bottom of the boat—"

"So she'd sink," grinned Micky.

"No," returned Moses with a snarl. "We'd plug 'em loosely from the bottom, tie stout cords to the ends of the plugs, and then tie the other ends of the cords to spikes we'd drive into out-of-sight places under water."

"Well," asked Micky, "wot then?"

"What then?" exclaimed Moses scornfully. "Why, when he pushed the boat out into the river, with him and the gal on board, the cords would pull out the plugs, wouldn't they?"

"Ef they wuz strong enough."

"We'll see they're strong enough," nodded his companion determinedly. "Then the water would come inter the cabin, and they'd never notice it till it began to run out inter the cock-pit, which is a foot higher. By that time they'd be way out on the river, too far to sail back afore the boat'd sink—see?"

Micky saw and grinned.

"Yer've got er great head arter all, Moses. I never'd have b'lieved it."

"Are you with me in this?"

"Betcher life I am."

"Come over to my house and we'll make the plugs. We'll stop at the store and I'll hook a roll of cord—we've got a lot of good stout stuff there that'll jest answer the purpose."

Then the two heads disappeared behind the shrubbery again, and the lane was as silent as before.

CAPTER XIV.

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

After they had got the tools and material together for their wicked project, Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs spent the rest of the evening until close on to night in the kitchen of the Wyse domicile playing cards.

Moses was accustomed to come in and go out when he chose without question from his mother, who felt obliged to knuckle to him as he was the chief support of the family, two of the other young Wyses being employed in the screen-room of the breaker at very small wages.

When the clock indicated a quarter to twelve, Moses threw down the cards and suggested to Micky that it was time to get busy.

"I'm ready," Master Gibbs, lighting another cigarette, an example immediately followed by Moses himself as he led the way outside.

He went to the woodshed and got the parcel.

Then the young rascals made their way to the river by a round-about way, whence they sneaked under the shadow of the banks till they reached Mr. Wesley's boat-house.

It wasn't a hard matter to force one of the side windows, and through this opening they entered the boat-house.

It took them more than an hour to accomplish their purpose, after which they got out as they had entered and close the window tight.

Then they went to their homes to dream over their expected revenge.

Promptly at three next day Fred knocked at the door of the Marsh cottage and was admitted by Mrs. Marsh.

"Annie is all ready and waiting for you," she said with a smile.

"And I'm on time to the minute," he said, pointing at the clock.

"I believe she'd had a conniption fit if you'd been five minutes late."

"The idea, mother! Aren't you awful!" exclaimed Annie, who entered the room at that moment, looking simply charming in her fetching summer hat and white lawn dress.

"You'll be back before dark, won't you?" asked Mrs. Marsh of Fred.

"Oh, yes, we expect to," answered the lad, who looked very handsome and manly in navy blue coat and trousers, cambric shirt with blue dots, and a wide leather belt and straw hat.

"They're a fine-looking couple," remarked many a miner's wife, observing them as they passed along the streets toward the Susquehanna. "I shouldn't be surprised if it will be a match."

Fred had the key to the boat-house.

"Let me help you on board?" said the boy, after they had entered.

Then he opened the tall outer door which came to a point like the upper half of a diamond, and gave the boat a stout push.

Something seemed to hold her back, and Fred looked to see what it was.

She was apparently clear, for when he pulled the boat inward a couple of feet she moved easily enough.

He gave her another shove, harder than before, when she floated clear with a jerk.

"I wonder what was the matter?" he thought as he jumped aboard and busied himself hoisting the sail.

The catboat darted off beautifully under the influence of a smacking breeze, and under the exhilaration of the moment he forgot all about the matter.

"It's a delightful afternoon, isn't it?" remarked Annie as Fred took his seat beside her and grasped the tiller.

"Couldn't be better if it had been made to order especially for us," he replied, heading the boat down the river.

How Moses and his accomplice, Micky, would have grinned if they could have seen those young people start on their fateful cruise; but Moses couldn't leave the store nor Micky the mine at that hour of the day.

The boat leaned to the influence of the wind, exposing a foot or so of her copper sheathing which flashed back the rays of the afternoon sunshine.

"Father said this morning you had a big offer for that pony of yours," said Annie from under her white sunshade.

"That's right. Three thousand dollars."

"Oh, my! Are you going to sell him? He's just the sweetest, dearest little thing I ever saw," she continued enthusiastically.

"No, I don't think I will—at least, not for that money."

"Is he worth more?"

"His sire is Theodolite, who once won the Brooklyn Handicap, and I don't know how many other events. He ought to turn out a winner. I consider \$5,000 nearer his figure."

"My, my!" said Annie, "you'll be a rich man some day."

"I mean to be, if I can get the money honestly."

"I'm sure you won't try to make it any other way," she answered earnestly.

"Thank you, Annie, for your good opinion of me," he said, much pleased.

"You're welcome," laughed the girl roguishly.

They were now out in the middle of the river, sailing free before a stiff breeze, yet Fred thought the boat was moving sluggishly for her.

And so she was, but the boy, of course, never once suspected the cause.

Had he glanced into the cabin the truth would instantly have become apparent, for it was now half full of water, and rising every moment.

But he had no occasion to do that, and so the boy and girl, chatting gayly, went on unconscious of the imminent danger facing them.

"What do you expect to do with your little farm?" asked Annie.

"Maybe I'll live there one of these days when I get married," he answered laughingly.

Their eyes met.

Annie dropped hers and blushed.

Why?

She could hardly have answered that question herself.

Perhaps there was something in Fred's eyes which she read aright.

We can't say.

"You know this is a great coal region?" she said, half questioningly.

"Well, I ought to. I've lived here long enough, while during the past year I've seen a good deal of the country with Mr. Wesley."

"Did it ever occur to you that way down somewhere, maybe hundreds of feet, under the soil of your farm, there might be coal?"

"What!" ejaculated the boy in surprise.

"Father was speaking about it the other night."

Fred made no reply.

The mere possibility of such a thing struck him dumb.

Smart, bright boy as he was, he had never thought of the matter before.

Yet such a thing was by no means an improbability.

Clover farm was in the very heart, you might say, of the Wyoming Valley coal region.

"You say your father suggested the idea?" asked Fred at length.

"Yes."

"I hardly dare hope for such a thing," he said, his voice trembling with suppressed excitement. "Why, if coal was found on my ground it would make me a rich man—or boy, rather."

"That's what father said. He intended to mention the matter to you."

"I mean to speak to Mr. Wesley about it."

"I would if I was you."

They were nearing a small wooded island at that moment.

Some bright flowers growing upon it attracted Annie's attention.

She was wonderfully fond of wild flowers.

"Do you think we could stop there a few minutes," she asked eagerly. "I do love flowers, and I'd like—"

"You'd like a sample of those yonder, eh?" he said mischievously.

"I would indeed."

"Then you shall have them. To wish for anything is equivalent to a command to me," said Fred heading the boat toward shore.

Was it the hand of Providence which was suddenly stretched out in their behalf?

"Aren't you good!" she cried, with a look which made him very happy.

The boat grounded heavily on the little strip of shingle.

Fred ran forward, leaped ashore and secured the catboat by her painter to a small tree.

Then he assisted Annie to land, and together they walked slowly toward where the flowers were growing in all their wild luxuriance.

Suddenly as they made their way through the bushes a man, wild looking and villainous, rose in front of them and barred their way.

He was clad almost in rags, and the famished glare in his eyes put one in mind of a starved hyena.

Annie screamed and started back in fear.

Fred stepped in front of her, calm and fearless, ready to protect her at any cost.

A keen glance of the stranger convinced Fred he had seen that face before, dirty as it was, and disguised by an unkempt growth of beard.

It was the face of a man he supposed was at that moment doing time in the far-away penitentiary of the State.

In other words it was Jake Wyse.

Fred was so surprised that he could not find words with which to address this escaped prison-bird.

No word or hint had reached the little mining village that Jake was at liberty.

The discovery came like a shock to the boy.

"It's you, Fred King! You to whom I owe so much. You, whom I swore to kill when I got out of the place your infernal evidence sent me to! And now I've got you within reach I'll carry out my oath if I swing for it. Yes, I mean to kill you here and now."

With a scream of fury he rushed on Fred and grappled with him.

Stout and brawny as the boy was, and nervy to the backbone, he suddenly felt like a child in the infuriated man's grasp.

They went down on the earth, Wyse on top, his hand searching for a knife he had, and against which Fred could not defend himself.

Annie looked on frozen to the spot with terror.

She saw Jake draw the glittering weapon and raise his arm to drive it home into the boy's breast, and the sight broke the spell which held her.

With a cry she suddenly picked up a stone at her feet and dashed it at Jake's head.

It took effect and staggered him.

The knife dropped from his hand.

At the same time Fred gave a mighty heave and threw off the villain.

Before he could get up, however, Wyse staggered to his feet, looked about in a dazed sort of way, and then rushed off down to the beach where the catboat lay.

He tore the painter loose, pushed the boat off, and leaped on board.

Then as the craft gathered headway, he seized the tiller and headed the boat down the river.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CURTAIN FALLS ON JAKE WYSE.

Fred King had made an effort to intercept Wyse, but Jake had been too quick for him.

Now it was out of reach and the boy and girl were left on the little island to their own resources.

Fred bit his lip with chagrin.

How they were to get ashore, unless they signaled some passing craft, and boats were not numerous on the river that afternoon, was a poser.

In the midst of these unpleasant reflections he noticed that something was going wrong with the catboat.

The catboat lurched to port, then pitched her nose forward, like a duck taking a dive, and then disappeared beneath the surface of the river, carrying Jake Wyse down with her. She was weighted down by her ballast.

Fred and Annie watched the distant bubbles and ever-increasing circles of the water with horrified surprise but not a sign of man or boat again appeared on the wavelets of the Susquehanna.

They sat there a long time, until, in fact, the lengthening shadows recalled Fred to a realization again of their unfortunate situation.

"I wonder how Jake Wyse got over here from the main shore?" Fred asked himself. "He certainly didn't swim. Then he must have come in a rowboat, or perhaps a raft. Whatever it was the chances are it's here yet somewhere along the shore. I'm going to look. Come along, Annie, let's take a walk."

She went with him readily enough, for she was as anxious as he to discover some means by which they might be enabled to leave the island.

And they were not disappointed.

A small skiff lay tied to a stake on the other side of the island.

There was a single pair oars in it.

They embarked at once, Fred pulled off his coat and got down to work, and a pretty tough job he had before him.

But he knuckled to it like he did to everything he took hold of, so that the matter simply resolved itself into a question of time.

"Oh, you truants!" exclaimed Mrs. Marsh when the two young people walked into the cottage at half-past eight o'clock. "You have been making an afternoon of it. Come now, sit up to the table and have your supper."

And Fred, between bites, told the story of their remarkable experiences on the river; but he could give no explanation for the sinking of the catboat.

That was a mystery to him.

The report that Jake Wyse had escaped from the State prison only to meet a tragic end in the Susquehanna created

considerable excitement in the mining village when the facts became generally known.

When Moses realized that he had unwittingly caused his father's death—that the trap he had set for others proved a veritable boomernag—he had a momentary spasm of remorse; but it didn't last long, for Moses never had any great love for his paternal parent.

Mr. Wesley did not blame Fred for the loss of his boat.

He took measures, however, to have her recovered.

A diver and a derrick-float were brought down from Wilkes-Barre and the catboat lifted to the surface.

Wyse's body was not found on board, but the astonishing fact was developed that five auger holes had been bored through the bottom of the boat's cabin.

This explained why she had sunk.

Who had done the deed, or why it had been perpetrated, was not so easily established.

Fred, when he heard about it, recalled the sluggish movement of the catboat when they were nearing the little wooded island.

At the first chance he went down to the place and carefully examined the basin in which the boat floated when housed.

He discovered the cords, and pulling them out of the water found a wooden plug, weighted with a bit of old iron, attached to each.

"The fellow at the back of this job will land in the penitentiary some day," he said indignantly, "that is if he is not hanged for murder beforehand."

He showed the bits of evidence to the chief engineer, and Mr. Wesley didn't waste many words in expressing his opinion of the author of the villainous deed.

He was so worked up over the matter that he sent to Wilkes-Barre for a detective, to whom he offered a handsome reward if he would discover the guilty party.

Before anything developed Mr. Wesley and Fred went off on a trip to survey a section of coal land some miles from the village.

During this trip Fred recalled what Annie had said that Saturday afternoon on the river about the possibility of there being coal on his Clover farm, and he asked Mr. Wesley what he thought about it.

"It would have to be prospected, probably to a depth of many feet here and there before anything like a definite idea could be arrived at. You see, Fred, the great coal vein of the Black Diamond branches off a mile to the east of your ground. That fact, coupled with many experiments over the intervening ground, which have not been productive, rather upsets the theory that there might be coal on your property. Still you can't always tell for certain. The best of us have missed a coal deposit by a narrow margin, and the discovery has been afterward made by accident. It would be a great thing for you if coal was found on your farm."

"I'm afraid you haven't much confidence in the presence of coal on my farm," said Fred in a disappointed tone.

"I won't say yes or no to that, my boy; but I would advise you by no means to dispose of the property until you have made some investigation of its underground possibilities. You are young yet, and you have lots of time before you. If there is coal there it won't run away. Stick to business as you are doing, and when you are in a position to make the necessary experiments then it will be time enough for you to act."

This was good advice, and Fred accepted it in the spirit in which it was given.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRED COMES OUT AT THE TOP.

It was Sunday and Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs had the whole day to themselves.

They had tumbled out of bed about the time most of the good people of the village were on their way to church, and after a hasty breakfast had met by previous appointment at the door of the old Dutch mill.

They intended to spend the afternoon fishing, a frequent Sunday recreation for them.

They kept their improvised poles and fishing lines, together with their bait cans, in a secluded nook of the mill, where they knew they could always put their hands on them.

After digging up a quantity of worms for bait they started off for a near-by stream.

"I seen King goin' to church this mornin' with that Marsh gal," said Micky. "He was dressed up to beat the band."

"Yah!" snarled Moses, for it was like waving a red flag before a bull to mention Fred's name to young Wyse.

"It's tough we can't get hunk on that feller," went on Gibbs. "We thought we had him dead to rights three months ago, when we took the trouble to bore them holes in that catboat, and blamed ef he didn't get off scot free."

"I'd like to drop a chunk of coal on his head," Moses remarked vindictively.

"Not much chance of doin' that."

"I'll tell you what we could do," said Moses, as if suddenly struck with an idea.

"Wot could we do?"

"You've heard about that colt of his, ain't you?"

"Yep."

"I heard a feller say he's worth \$3,000."

"Wot yer drivin' at?"

"S'pose we go over to Clover farm to-night and set the barn afire. The colt will be inside, and his name will be mud—see?"

"And ef we get ketched doin' it our names'll be mud, too."

"Ho! Who's to know anythin' about it? We didn't get caught for what we done to the boat, did we?"

"That's right—we didn't. Well, I'm with yer in anyt'in' that'll take that feller down, Moses."

"I'll tell yer how we'll do it."

Moses outlined his scheme, which met with Micky's approval.

They were to go to the Clover farm about midnight, crawl in through the manure hole, pile the dry hay well up around the colt's stall, and set it on fire.

They calculated not only that the colt would be burned up, but that the whole barn would be destroyed.

It was a cruel and wanton act to put in practise, but then it was quite in line with the heartless natures of the two mad boys.

They talked over the plan for some time while they fished in the stream, occasionally making a finny capture, and appeared to be tickled over the scheme.

They wouldn't have been quite so happy if they had known that every word they uttered was overheard by the Wilkesbarre detective, who had been shadowing them for the past three months in the hope of getting the evidence against them he wanted.

On account of their doubtful characters, and former open animosity to Fred King, they had come under suspicion of the catboat affair.

The detective happened to be sunning himself among the bushes that day, without any particular object on hand, when the two boys came out there to fish.

"What a pair of young villains they are!" thought the detective as he listened to their conversation. "So they're going to fire the barn on the Clover farm to-night, are they? Very good. I guess I'll treat them to a bit of surprise. It's high time their career was wound up in this section of the State."

Having got possession of their entire plan of operations, the detective withdrew and went to his boarding place for dinner.

Then he made a call on Mr. Wesley.

"We must arrange to catch those young scamps in the act so as to be able to make out a clear case against them," he said to the chief engineer after he had gone over the discovery he had made beside the stream.

"I agree with you," was Mr. Wesley's reply.

The chief engineer soon after sent his gardener to hunt up Fred King.

He found him at John Marsh's.

Fred was surprised at the summons, and not particularly pleased to leave the society of Miss Annie; but he felt obliged to report, as requested, at the home of the chief engineer.

He was immediately admitted to the conference between the detective and his chief, and when he learned the particulars he was not sorry he had come.

About nine o'clock that night Mr. Wesley, Fred and the detective went out to the Clover farm.

Fred's tenant was called upon to assist in the plan arranged to capture Moses Wyse and his crony, Micky Gibbs.

At eleven the four entered the barn and concealed themselves near the stall of the valuable little colt.

They had to wait so long before anything transpired that they began to fear the young rascals had postponed the execution of their scheme.

It was half-past twelve when a noise was heard at the manure hole.

A few moments later Moses Wyse and Micky Gibbs were in the barn.

They lighted a lantern they had brought with them and looked around the place.

"All's serene," said Micky, and then they went to work.

In ten minutes they had gathered enough of the hay to suit their purpose, and nothing remained but to set fire to the pile and escape.

"Let's open that big window yonder," said Moses.

"Wot fur?" asked Micky impatiently.

"It'll make a draft and help the fire burn; besides, we can get out quicker that way."

"All right," answered Master Gibbs.

Then while one held the lantern the other opened it and took out the candle to complete their work.

At that moment a heavy hand fell on each of their shoulders.

They looked up in alarm to find themselves prisoners to the detective and Fred's tenant, and Fred and Mr. Wesley stepped out from their place of concealment and took the candle and lantern from their nerveless fingers.

"The game is up, you young rascals," said the detective sternly. "You'll have to go with me."

Moses broke down like a whipped cur, but Micky was defiant.

They were bound, tossed into a light wagon, and the whole party, with the exception of the chief engineer, drove to Wilkesbarre, where Fred made the charge and they were locked up.

Subsequently they were tried and sent to the State prison for seven years.

Fred King celebrated his nineteenth birthday by selling his colt for \$5,000 to a wealthy horseman, who believed he had got a bargain even at that figure.

A few weeks later he was still further advanced in the office of the Black Diamond colliery.

With \$5,000 in bank he became more than ever anxious to penetrate the surface of his twenty acres for signs of coal. His capital had been reduced as he had paid off the mortgage on his farm.

He had talked the matter over many times with John Marsh as well as with the chief engineer.

While the former encouraged the project, the latter did not favor it greatly, as his experience in the neighborhood did not point to favorable results in that locality.

However, Fred finally determined to proceed, and hired a competent man to make the investigations.

It cost the boy all of \$2,000, and very many discouraging hours, before anything tangible transpired.

But in the end a big vein of coal was discovered many feet below the surface of Clover farm, and the boy's financial future was assured.

The Black Diamond company made a tempting offer, more than a quarter of a million, for the property after their own experts had verified the estimated value of the coal deposit, and Fred accepted it.

Two years later, before he had quite reached his twenty-second year, Fred found himself called upon to fill the position of chief engineer for the Black Diamond Coal Company, Mr. Wesley having resigned for a more lucrative position elsewhere.

A month later he was married in the village church to Annie Marsh, to whom he had been engaged two years.

The officers and several of the directors of the Black Diamond colliery were present at the wedding, and were unanimous as to the beauty of the bride and the manly, energetic character of the bridegroom.

At the reception which followed at the Marsh cottage, Fred was called on for a speech, and responded by saying, among other things, that he had now been in the coal company's employ for eleven years, and hoped to remain for many years more.

And there were many persons present who remembered that four of those years had passed in the slavery of the screen-room, while he was a diamond in the rough.

Next week's issue will contain "A WIDE-AWAKE BOY; OR, BORN WITH A WINNING STREAK."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Carabao, the notorious outlaw of the Lanao and Cotabato districts in the Philippines, surrendered recently to the governor of Cotabato. The surrender was arranged by Ignacio Ortoste, recently appointed third member of the provincial board of Cotabato. Carabao was a sergeant of constabulary, and deserted six years ago with a number of men and arms. He has turned in all the arms taken at the time of his desertion.

Consul John H. Snodgrass, of Kobe, reports that since Dr. Koch advised the keeping of cats as the best means for the prevention of plague, the Japanese authorities have been active in investigating the number of cats maintained and their relative value. The result of investigations made by the police shows that there are 54,389 cats kept in Osaka, a city of 1,500,000 population, the families where cats are kept numbering 48,222. In addition there are 5,096 homeless cats. It is noteworthy that in certain parts of the city, recognized as more liable to plague, no cats are found.

So far as is known the largest map in the world is the ordnance survey map of England. It contains indications of over 108,000 streets, and cost \$1,000,000. Twenty years were required to complete the work. In this map we find a scale varying from ten feet to one-eighth of an inch to the mile. The details are so minute that sections having a scale of twenty-five inches show every hedge, fence, wall, building and every isolated tree. The plans show not only the exact shape of every building, but every porch, area, doorstep, lamp-post, railway and fire plug.

The battleship New York, with the record of being the fastest ship of her size and tonnage in the world, docked the other day at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. She had been on a trial trip for a week off the Maine coast. It was learned that she had excelled the best mark of her sister ship, the Texas. On her trial trips the latter registered 21.22 knots, while the New York is credited with 21.47 knots an hour. Off Rockland, and under favorable conditions, the new dreadnought developed a speed of 22.44 knots. There was never a lack of steam since the ship started her trial. She ran for twenty hours at 21 knots and twenty additional hours at 19 knots.

A report from Belgium by the correspondent of an English automobile trade journal tells of a most extraordinary use of an automobile top. It seems that a British patrol succeeded in capturing a German touring car in which two officers were seated. The motor had broken down and the officers were made prisoners of war. In glancing over the car, one of the patrol noticed a wire connection to the "skeleton" of the raised top. Following the wire he pulled from under the seat a telephone receiver and, holding it to his ear, was dumbfounded when he could plainly hear a message coming from nowhere in particular. The top-

skeleton formed the receiving wires of a wireless telephone station, and the message came from the nearest headquarters of the army corps to which the officers belonged.

An attack in force on the White House in Washington is threatened by Mrs. John Laird, of Garfield, Ore., who announces her intention of bearing down on President Wilson with her family of ten children, weighing in the aggregate 2,085 pounds, or an average of 208 pounds per child. The heaviest, who is twenty years old, weighs 295 pounds; three others weigh 245 pounds each. The mother of this ponderous family is, comparatively, a featherweight, tipping the scale at a paltry 135. The avoirdupois of the father is not told. Such a family would have filled the day with joy for the colonel. It should quicken the wonder, if not the admiration, of President Wilson. Mrs. Laird is frequently heard to remark that "the President just ought to see these lovely children."

Every time 1,000 feet of cut lumber is turned out 350 pounds of sawdust drops off in waste. In the province of British Columbia alone the annual lumber output is estimated at 1,850,000,000 feet. This means a sawdust waste of 236,250 tons. The theory that sawdust could be made worth more than a useless pile on a dump heap, or coverings for barroom floors and icy sidewalks has long been germinating. Now two British Columbia concerns are beginning to compress sawdust into bricks, or briquets, to be sold for fuel, and the same thing can be done in Washington, Oregon, Michigan and other timber States. It is estimated that the 236,250 tons of sawdust waste in British Columbia alone would be worth \$1,417,500 if turned into bricks at six dollars per ton. It is estimated that the cost, including depreciation, interest on the capital, insurance and other items, would average three dollars per ton.

Intense rivalry between the football teams of the University of Alabama and the Sewanee University was recently emphasized when twelve students of the former school determined to walk to Birmingham from Tuscaloosa and back, fifty-nine miles each way, rather than miss the game. These students were working their way through college, and they made the trip afoot as a matter of economy. It was either a case of walk or miss the game. The party left Tuscaloosa in the afternoon and spent the entire night on the hike. The hike from Tuscaloosa to Birmingham was made by nine of the bunch in thirteen hours actual walking time, while three members of the party covered it in eleven hours and twenty minutes, establishing a new walking record between the two cities. The party reached Birmingham at 4:15 in the morning, rested until the game was called, saw it through, then hiked back to Tuscaloosa. All declared that they felt well paid for their jaunt.

THE GALLANT TROOPER

— OR —

FIGHTING FOR UNCLE SAM

By **GASTON GARNE**

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VII (continued)

"You poor, dear child," she exclaimed, bustling up to Diana, and patting the pale cheek. "The captain has told me all about your trouble, and I am so sorry for you. Come right along with me. You shall share my room, and it won't take me five minutes to make you a cup of tea over my little spirit lamp. No one will know that you are in the building at all. Dear, dear, who would ever think that Miss Skelton could treat you so badly. Poor lamb, you look tired out, but a good night's rest will soon make you feel like a different person. Good-night, Captain Noble, I will take good care of her," and she bustled out of the room, taking Diana with her, leaving Captain Noble sitting thoughtfully beside the table.

CHAPTER VIII.

ORDERED TO THE FRONT.

During the commencement week at Lake Forest Military Academy rumors of the trouble with the Indians on the frontier had been coming in thick and fast, and almost every day regiments were ordered out, until there was scarcely any of the militia left in that part of the country. And yet it seemed impossible to conquer the red demons who were ruthlessly slaughtering women and children, burning whole villages in spite of all the soldiers could do.

The state of affairs troubled Captain Noble sorely, and that was one reason why he looked so grave after Diana had gone with Mrs. Webb to her room. Another reason was that poor little Mrs. Golden in whom he had become so strangely interested, was unhappy at Lakeside Seminary.

"If I had the courage I would like to ask the little woman to marry me, but I believe I would rather face a cannon than attempt a proposal of that kind. She certainly needs someone to look after her, heaven bless her, and I am a poor, forlorn bachelor who longs for some comforts. But," with a sigh, "I fear it will have to go by me this time, unless I get over this feeling. I wish she would start the subject herself, then I might pluck up courage."

As such a course on Mrs. Golden's part was entirely out of the question it would seem as if the poor captain was doomed to a life of single-blessedness for the rest of his life. And when he at last retired he fell asleep only to dream that he wedded the shy, pretty widow, and the

next day was ordered out to the frontier where the trouble was thickest.

Strange as it may seem the next morning the first news that greeted him was, that Gen. Custer would that day pass through Lake Forest on his way to the assistance of his comrades on the frontier, consequently the school was thrown into a state of excitement, and immediately after breakfast there was a rush to each boy's room, a hasty examination of buckles and buttons, hurried preparations to make a good showing, and then they formed in a body to march away and greet the gallant soldier whom they had never as yet seen.

Captain Noble had good reason to be proud of his school, and Vivian Merle's heart beat high as with firm, steady step they marched forward to welcome the great Custer.

On either side of the street he was to pass through they halted, forming in two bodies, one on either side of the road.

Straight and erect everyone stood, shoulders well thrown back, chest out. The bright morning sunlight shone full upon the glittering bayonets, the shining brass buttons and splendid gold trimming of their handsome captain's uniform, and it is safe to add that every boy present felt himself to be a full-fledged soldier.

Nearly an hour passed, and still the eagerly watched-for hero came not. Many of the spectators had grown weary of waiting, and every now and then a low murmur, followed by a hand-clapping, would run through the crowd. So motionless did the boys in uniform stand that they seemed like statues. The sun grew hotter and hotter, but they did not mind it, for were they not soon to see the gallant hero whom they all worshipped?

At last the faint, far-away sound of a bugle came to their ears, followed by the ring of iron shod hoofs, and in breathless silence the mass of men and women leaned forward, straining their eyes to catch a glimpse of him. Presently a cloud of dust arose and then a loud cheer burst from the waiting throng as the form of a horse and rider came into view at the head of the long column. Cheer after cheer rent the June air, hats and handkerchiefs were waved wildly as the gallant Custer came riding by mounted on his famous black horse "Satan." First to the right and then to the left the handsome general bowed, a smile lighting up his face. A less skillful rider could not have retained his seat in the saddle, for the big vicious black pranced and reared, striking out wickedly with his iron shod fore feet, while his master did not seem to mind

it at all, his long, fair locks flowing carelessly over his shoulders, the sunshine lighting it to a living, burning gold.

And then a strange thing happened. When he was just opposite a gothic house, close to the edge of the walk, a young girl standing upon the balcony leaned far out, and threw a large wreath of flowers toward the gallant rider. At the same instant the black steed reared, and the garland intended for the master slipped over the horse's head, hanging about the smooth, satin neck. General Custer looked up at the balcony, kissing his hand to his fair admirer and then rode on amidst cheers that drowned the sound of the music. It was a pretty picture, one never to be forgotten, and afterwards when word came back that the bold, dauntless soldier had been murdered with all of his gallant little band, men and women with tears in their eyes, spoke of the day they last saw him when he rode away, as he supposed to victory and triumph, the garland woven over the neck of the black horse Satan, almost as famous as his heroic master. They thought of him lying dead among the Black Hills away from his home and friends, his dauntless little army with him and they sighed.

Captain Noble congratulated Vivian Merle when they returned to the Academy, and he was more particular than ever after that about the drilling. Almost a week went by. The school year was ended, the boys were packing up, preparing to go home for their annual vacation when, like a thunderbolt falling in their midst, came this message from Gen. Scarlett, who was stationed at the garrison nearest the frontier where the trouble was:

"Get together a volunteer company as quickly as you can, and come to our relief. Every troop called out. Matters look worse than ever. No delay.

"GENERAL SCARLETT."

CHAPTER IX.

"LET ME GO IN HIS PLACE."

The effect of this message upon Captain Noble was like touching a lighted match to inflammable material. He was an old soldier, and he loved the din of battle far better than the quiet life he was then leading. The boom of the cannons, the roll of musketry were sweeter music to his ear than the finest orchestra in the world, and the hoarse shouts of command thrilled his heart as the voice of no prima donna could ever hope to thrill it with her softest notes. His eyes flashed, his nostrils dilated, and, throwing his shoulders back, he began pacing the room with military tread.

"So I am to smell powder and smoke once more," he murmured, excitedly, "and I must say that I am glad of it, for I am weary of this dull, tame existence, the same thing over and over again from day to day. I must tell the boys and get them in readiness. I know Vivian Merle will be pleased, and so will a great many of the others. The only one whom I fear will show the white feather at the last moment is Clarence Kendal. And yet why should I doubt him now? He certainly proved himself a hero the day he saved Vivian from drowning. At the same

time I notice he is just as nervous at drill as ever. Poor fellow, I suppose he cannot help it."

It is not necessary for me to state that the news was received joyfully by the boys at the Academy. They had longed for an opportunity to show what they were made of, and now they would soon have the chance, and their hearts beat high with hope at the thought.

All save one were delighted, and the announcement that they were to go on to the frontier filled him with dismay. He trembled from head to foot, his face grew pale, his lips dried and cracked, and the boys next to him, noticing it, turned away in disgust.

"He is the biggest coward I ever saw in all my life," Charlie Root remarked contemptuously, "and he is a disgrace to the school."

"Perhaps he does not like the idea of leaving the very charming Miss Sinclair," Manuel de Garcia said with one of his evil smiles.

"He is *not* a coward," Vivian Merle's voice suddenly broke in, and they turned quickly about, for they did not know that he was anywhere near them. "He did not prove himself a coward on the day of the boat race. Cowardice is a word better applied to the scoundrel or scoundrels who so basely attempted my life. Clarence Kendal is no coward."

Muttering something beneath their breaths, they made an excuse to get away from him as quickly as they could.

He stood watching them, a look of doubt and anxiety in his eyes.

"I do not know why it is, but I find it impossible to either trust or like those fellows," he muttered, shaking his head. "They neither one of them like me—I can see it in their faces. Well, I have no time to waste on either one now. There is something else to be done," and he went to his own room to make preparations to leave, for they were to go the next day.

Captain Noble was so very busy getting everything in readiness that he saw but very little of any of his pupils. He had ordered them to be ready to start at a moment's notice, and he spent the greater part of his time in ordering the articles that were to be taken with them. It was an entirely different thing going hundreds of miles away from home and friends into a wild country, swarming with hostile savages, than simply drilling and living in luxury at Lake Forest Military Academy. One was work, the other mere play, and the change was destined to turn them from light-hearted boys into serious men, who at last realized what war meant.

On the night before their departure Captain Noble, having everything in readiness for the morrow, sat alone in his study, awaiting the entrance of Diana Le Grand, who was still there.

He had sent word to her that he wished to see her for a few moments, and while he was waiting his face grew worried and perplexed.

"I do not know what to do with the child," he muttered. "She cannot remain here, and she cannot return to the Seminary, neither will she go back to Madam Le Grand. And she has no place to go. Poor child, she is, indeed, to be pitied."

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

INDOOR ROWING TANK.

One of the perplexing problems encountered by coaches of the various varsity racing shell crews, that of providing better means for winter training than is offered by the ordinary rowing machine, has been met satisfactorily at Syracuse University through the installation of an indoor rowing tank, provided with mechanical means for simulating the passage of the boat through the water, says *Popular Mechanics*. This provides what might almost be called *actual rowing*, besides keeping the men in condition.

The tank proper is 60 feet in length and approximately 31½ feet in width. The boat substituted for the regulation shell is launched in still water at the middle of the chamber, and held in place by springs which connect with upright iron rods. This arrangement allows sufficient play so that the craft rides naturally. In operation the effect is like natural rowing, except that the water moves and the boat remains stationary. The arrangement which has been worked out to provide a natural oar pull is ingenious. On the outer sides of the tank and also on either side of the boat are sluice-ways. Through the medium of a 50-horsepower steam engine and a number of propellers, the water is kept in constant circulation, moving past the craft from bow to stern and then returning through the coverts to be used over again. The engine drives the water at a rate of about six miles an hour, while the oar pull increases this to eight miles, thus making the current and the resistance against the oars approximately equivalent to that met in outdoor practice.

THE DAILY FOOD OF AN ARMY.

How an army in the field gets its food from day to day is an interesting story that is told in the special war edition of the *Scientific American*, from which the following extracts are taken:

The supply train of an infantry division carries two days' field and grain rations. In the late afternoon or at the end of a march or close of a combat the division commander directs the field trains to move up immediately in rear of the troops and informs the commanding officers of organizations that one day's rations have been ordered to a designated place. An orderly is sent to that place to conduct the wagons to the organization; after being unloaded they return immediately and join the grouped portion of the ration section. That same night or early the following morning the empty wagons are refilled from the supply train, and this latter secures a renewal of its supplies from a designated point on the line of communications or is reloaded from a train pertaining to the line of communications, if the distance from the end of that line of the zone occupied by the troops is so great as to warrant the use of a train.

There are two methods of supplying an army in the field:

1. By consignments of supplies forwarded by the service of the line of communications and distributed as above briefly indicated; and

2. By utilizing the resources of the country.

It is generally necessary to utilize to the fullest extent the food, especially the forage, available in the theater of operations. In former times the invader possessed the right of booty and pillage, the resort to which was most unfortunate for the army, as it embittered the population and compromised the safety of the troops in an enemy's country, and in the event of any real or imagined injury being done them it gave rise to redress and reprisals.

A GREAT DISK.

A gigantic glass disk, weighing nearly 5,000 pounds, to be used in the new telescope to be erected by the Canadian government in Vancouver, has arrived in Pittsburgh, Pa., where it will be prepared for use.

A Pittsburgh company has the contract for grinding and polishing the disk, while a Cleveland concern will build the mountings for the telescope. Commenting on the great disk and its journey to his plant, Doctor John A. Brashear said:

"The great glass disk for the immense reflecting telescope that is to be constructed for the Canadian government was shipped from St. Gobain, France, about a week before war was declared, and it fortunately reached New York by way of Antwerp. As the package was so large and difficult to handle, the railroad was delayed in getting a suitable car for shipping it to Pittsburgh, but it is now there.

"With a big wagon and by the aid of six horses and as many good men to take care of its transportation, it was safely placed in our optical shop, although the doorjambs had to be torn out in order that the glass could be passed through it. The glass disk is 73 inches in diameter, 13½ inches thick, and weighs very nearly 5,000 pounds.

"Doctor Plaskett, assistant to Doctor King, chief astronomer of the Canadian government, visited the works, and, after a careful examination, pronounced it one of the finest pieces of glass ever cast for a reflecting telescope. The disk was then accepted by the Canadian authorities.

"The 100-inch disk for the Mount Wilson observatory, another big one recently finished, was made by pouring the contents of three pots or crucibles of glass into the mold, and a great many internal imperfections were thus unfortunately made, although the latest investigations of the glass show it to be practically perfect on its surface, and great hopes are expressed by the astronomers at Mount Wilson that the large mirror is going to prove entirely satisfactory. In the case of the present disk, it was all made with one pouring, and it is remarkably free from bubbles or other defects."

The Fight for the Pirate's Isle

—OR—

CAPTAIN DIABLO'S LAST CRUISE

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XIX (continued)

He turned round and swam back to the beach.

Then Dick Decker, freed from the enemy, pulled his craft right out into the ocean.

Soon he was lost in the gloom of the night.

Boiling over with impotent rage, Captain Diablo stood on the shore watching his mortal foe disappear.

He hurled execrations at him, but was powerless to do more.

He might have pursued him in the other boat, but it would have taken some time to start, and he knew that unaided he could not overtake the young sailor.

The pirate chief remained on the alert, apprehensive of an attack.

For, he reasoned to himself, if Dick Decker and the man the pirates were pursuing were on the island, might they not have companions?

"Blame the dogs! why don't they come back?" he muttered savagely.

Cutlass in hand, he stood and waited.

It was a long time before he heard sounds of his men returning.

His usually villainous temper had been rendered worse by the day's events.

As the pirates appeared, he loaded them with reproaches.

"Lazy hounds! have you brought back the scoundrel?"

Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on:

"Of course not. I knew it. Your feet are weighted like the keel of a ship, or perhaps you were afraid. Ha, ha! that's it—afraid!"

Ruiz rarely ventured to remonstrate with his chief.

To have done so on the deck of the Rattlesnake or on the Pirates' Isle would have meant death.

But here, stranded on an unknown island, things were somewhat different.

"Captain, there's no want of courage about us, as you ought to know. How many times have we faced death for you and will again? But by St. Iago, a man may be pardoned for not seeing his man in this blackness."

"What?" said the Sea Demon, in somewhat milder accents, "did you not see him?"

"Yes, we saw him once only. Then he disappeared among the trees. Caramba! my captain, we had enough to do to look out for ourselves then without bothering about him. Falling over rocks and down precipices isn't pleasant, is it, Curillo?"

The man the lieutenant addressed was busily engaged

in stanching the blood that flowed freely from his face and head.

His only reply was a smothered oath.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Sea Demon. "You don't like playing blind man's buff."

"Hulloa!" suddenly shouted Ruiz in excited tones. "One of the boats has gone!"

The rest of the gang looked, and seeing the lieutenant had spoken the truth, they exhibited much surprise.

Captain Diablo was alone unmoved.

"I know it," he said, calmly.

"You know it?" repeated Ruiz.

"Yes." He smiled in a mysterious manner.

"Then perhaps, captain, since you knew it had gone, you might also know how it went."

Ruiz was uneasy. He suspected some villainous plot on the part of the pirate chief to leave him, or at least some of the men, on the island.

"Oh, yes, I know how it went," laughed Captain Diablo.

"Then for heaven's sake tell us!" said Ruiz, impatiently.

"Gently—gently, Ruiz, not so much hurry. Sit down, my friend, and have a smoke."

He took two cigars from his pocket as he spoke, and handed the lieutenant one.

"Make the most of this, Ruiz. I have few left, and how long we shall be in this cursed place can't be told." Then bowing in a mock polite manner he sometimes assumed to the rest of the band, he said: "Gentlemen, I'm sorry I can't offer you cigars as well."

Seated round the fire, in the darkness of the night, the men listened breathlessly to the words that fell from the chief's lips about Dick Decker.

"Saw him! You bet I saw him."

"But you may have made a mistake, captain."

"Mistake? Nonsense! 'Mistakes' can't row boats. That requires men."

"I don't mean that, but that it wasn't Dick Decker."

"Ruiz, I made no mistake. I saw his hateful face as he stood in the boat, and if my pistol hadn't failed me he'd have been a corpse."

"Why didn't you follow him?"

"So I did, and nearly got brained for my trouble. He brought an oar down within a few inches of my skull."

"He's got a charmed life."

"Yes, but listen to the waves. Hark! how they roar!"

His face assumed a demoniac expression.

"Go on, my beauties," he muttered. "You couldn't please me better."

"But it will keep us on the island."

"What matter? The storm will send Dick Decker to the bottom."

"You are right, captain. He may resist us, but nature is his master. But see, the sun's just beginning to show up."

Shortly it was light.

Eagerly the men gazed on the water for some appearance of the Boy Commander.

But there was not anything moving to be seen on the angry sea which was now a mass of foam.

Against the rocks the waters beat furiously.

"Guess he's in Davy Jones' locker by this time."

"Yes, Ruiz."

"What shall we do? We don't dare to put out to sea in this awful gale."

"It's quite out of the question. Now it's light we'll search the island for that villain we chased last night."

Dividing themselves up and leaving two men in charge of the boat, the rest started off with the intention of capturing Jim Miller.

CHAPTER XX.

DICK VISITS THE PIRATES' ISLE.

Dick Decker could never understand how he survived that awful night.

Soon after he had steered through the quiet water into the open sea the storm rose in all its fury.

For a time he endeavored to keep the boat's head to the wind.

But shortly this had to be abandoned.

The little craft was tossed hither and thither like a cork.

Sometimes it was half full of water.

Dick, groping around in the dark, found a tin.

With this he occupied himself in baling out the water.

He knew not where he was drifting.

Every moment he expected a gigantic wave would engulf the frail craft, or that it would be dashed to pieces on the rocks.

But when daylight came he was still afloat.

The storm showed no signs of abating.

But he did not feel quite so helpless as in the dark.

He looked around anxiously for the island as he rose on the crest of the great rollers.

But it was lost to sight.

Neither was a sail visible.

Dick Decker was alone once more on the ocean.

"Is this to be the last time," he muttered. "Well, I'll keep up my courage. I've never lost heart yet."

Towards noon he began to feel hungry.

But a sense of terrible thirst came over him which was even worse.

Catching sight of a keg he sprang toward it, almost capsizing the boat in his eagerness.

"Full," he shouted, as he attempted to lift it. "This is a find. I wonder what it contains?"

Drawing the cork, he turned the cask around and poured some of the contents into the tin he had used for baling.

"Water."

Dick Decker took a long drink and carefully replaced the cork.

To him at this moment the liquid was more precious than gold.

For his life depended on it.

Then he found in the locker at the stern a bag of biscuits, old and stale, but still sufficient to sustain life.

"Wonder how these things came here! Oh! I know. I recollect seeing one of the pirates chuck them in as they were lowering the boat. Well, it was very thoughtful of them anyway."

This is how his thoughts ran.

Towards evening the sea began to moderate.

Again, Dick took the sculls, and steering by the sun, rowed in what he thought was the direction of the Isle of Delight.

From time to time he rested.

And when it became dark, worn out with fatigue, he slept heavily.

When he awoke it was daylight.

He felt thoroughly refreshed, and after a good drink of water and a couple of hard biscuits, his strength was as great as ever.

"Can my eyes deceive me?" he cried suddenly, as he looked around on the ocean.

"No, no!" he shouted, "it's no dream, it's the pirate's isle."

It was quite true.

The boat had drifted in the storm a great distance, and now it was riding on the waves not far from the entrance to Captain Diablo's stronghold.

The situation was puzzling.

What was to be done?

Should he hang about trusting to the Albatross heaving in sight?

There was something to be said for this proposal.

But then might not Captain Diablo and his men come along in the other boat?

Dick Decker naturally assumed that they would not leave their haven until the storm moderated.

"Anyway, they won't be here just yet," he murmured.

There was no fear of any one from the island paying him a visit.

No one but Captain Diablo knew the secret of the dangerous passage.

"By heaven! I'll do it!" exclaimed the Boy Commander, after gazing for a long time at the island thoughtfully. "It's risky, still I'll have a try. I watched Captain Diablo carefully when he brought the brig out to sea and here goes for it."

He seated himself with the two sculls in his hands and pulled vigorously.

At every stroke the noise of the sea increased.

He was gradually approaching the Devil's Punchbowl. The waters roared, as they eddied backwards and forwards.

(To be continued)

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"I challenge the world," and with that statement a well-known fruit grower of Citrus Heights, near Sacramento, Cal., produced one of the biggest apples ever grown in Sacramento or any other county. A great White Astrakhan it was, weighing twenty-nine ounces, seventeen inches in circumference, and sixteen inches around measuring by way of the stem. Another, only a trifle smaller, weighed twenty-five ounces, and three others, weighing about twenty ounces each, came from the same tree.

For many years, F. H. Millener, experimental engineer of the Union Pacific Railway, has been working on wireless telephone apparatus for direct communication with moving trains. He announces that his plans have been completed and a satisfactory system has been developed, whereby he is able to talk with a moving train a hundred miles away from the wireless transmitting station. Wireless stations are to be established at Grand Island and North Platte, Neb.; Cheyenne and Green River, Wyo., and Ogden, Utah.

Twenty-five thousand Northern Indians are threatened with starvation owing to war closing European fur markets. The Hudson Bay Company explains that owing to the war it has no market for its present surplus and thus cannot advance the usual supplies which in past years the Indian has been allowed to go into debt for, pending his

return with the season's catch. Revillon Frères and independent traders who also have trading posts throughout the great north land are taking a similar view. While nothing has as yet been done by the government, it is likely large amounts of supplies will be shipped by scow down the Athabasca and other rivers into the far interior, to alleviate the suffering.

The Alaska-Canada boundary from the St. Elias Range straight north along the 141st meridian to the Arctic Ocean has been in progress since 1907, and is reported to have been completed during the past summer. This undertaking was notable for several reasons. No other modern boundary demarcation has extended into such high latitudes, and few boundaries of equal length anywhere in the world are so straight; the line follows the meridian without the slightest deviation, regardless of mountains, swamps and forests. Wherever the boundary passes through timber and brush a 20-foot clearing has been made. Monuments have been set up along the entire line, at points visible from each other; generally at distances of three or four miles. At important points these monuments are 5-foot shafts of aluminum bronze, weighing 300 pounds, set in 2,000 pounds of concrete. The boundary is 600 miles long, and is marked by about 200 monuments.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Having missed considerable honey from an apiary on his farm in Milan Township, near Milan, Ohio, William Weikel set a trap for the suspected thief. The miscreant proved to be a large black skunk.

Speed of more than sixty miles an hour was developed by the Disturber IV., a forty-foot hydroplane, owned by James A. Pugh, of Chicago, in a trial spin on Lake Michigan recently. The speed is said to be the greatest a boat was ever ridden. Its engine turned 1,600 revolutions a minute.

The largest catch of big game ever made was accomplished near Buttonwillow, Cal. George S. Palmer, head cattleman for Miller & Lux, sprung the great trap and caught 150 elk. At a signal fifty vaqueros closed in behind, nearly the last of the thousands in the San Joaquin. Dr. Everman, director of the California Academy of Sciences, will distribute the elk to parks in the State.

Three boys who shipped themselves in a reinforced, upholstered piano box from Binghamton, N. Y., to Colma, Cal., as freight, were discovered when a sweating truckman dumped the box on the floor of the Erie freight house in Chicago. The travelers are Willard E. Montague, Carl Espe and William Fox. They wanted to go to a ranch owned by Mortague's uncle, and not having the railroad fare they had shipped themselves in the piano box with a stock of canned goods. They had been traveling a week and had expected to reach California in a fortnight more.

The historic old Sheepshead Bay racetrack, Brooklyn, N. Y., has been sold. The course, it is reported, is to be transformed into a huge motordrome for automobile and motorcycle races. The price is said to have been \$2,500,000. The Coney Island Jockey Club, owners of the property, took six months to decide that the day of thoroughbred racing had passed. The tract embraces 430 acres. The motordrome project is said to have been financed under the direction of an official of the National City Bank.

The latest researches prove that the finest pearls are not formed by the oyster as a coating for grains of sand, but to protect itself against a microscopic insect enemy, a sort of fluke, known as the diatoma. The substance of which a pearl is formed is a secretion caused by a diseased condition of a portion of the oyster's anatomy. Pearls all over the world have exactly the same composition, namely, water, calcium carbonate, and a certain amount of organic or animal matter. As the pearl trade is at present over \$3,000,000 a year, it is safe to say that no other known disease yields such valuable results. The most valuable specimen found in recent years was secured off the north coast of Australia. It consisted of nine pearls joined together in the shape of a crucifix, almost perfect in shape. It is known as the Southern Cross, and was sold for \$50,000.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

"Faith, Mrs O'Hara, how d'ye till them twins apart?" "Aw, its aisy. I sticks me finger in Dinny's mouth, an' if he bites I know it's Moike."

"One thing I like about our new man," said a member of the firm to his partner, "is that he is reliable. You can always tell what he is going to do next." "And what is that?" "Nothing."

New Barber (referring to shaving cup)—Isn't yours a fancy mug, Mr. O'Reilly? O'Reilly—Say, Misther Barber, Oi'll break your face if ye git personal. Do ye see onything fancy about my mug?

"Any objections to my smoking here?" asked the offensively cheerful man as the vessel gave another disquieting lurch. "None," replied the pale chap in the steamer chair, "here—or hereafter!"

Employer—What! You want a raise? Why, when I was an office boy, I had to work five years before I got one. Boy—Yessir; but perhaps you were one of those fatheaded kids that ain't worth a raise.

"You handle large sums of money in this play—a million or more in every act." "I see," said Yorick Hamm. "And you must handle it as if you were used to it." "I see. Could you let me have a two-dollar bill to rehearse with?"

Banker Sussell (who with his friends has made an excursion into the woods, is summoned by his servant, who brings important news)—But, however did you find me, Jean? Servant—Oh, I simply followed the empty wine bottles.

An Irish recruit, visiting the medical officer with his face badly swollen, said: "I want to know what's the matter with my tooth, sir?" The medical officer looked at the offending molar and informed the recruit that the nerve of the tooth was dead. "Well, by hivens," replied the recruit, "the others must be houldin' a wake over it!"

A QUEEN'S CRIME.

By D. W. Stevens

One of the most glorious names in the history of Sweden is that of Gustavus Adolphus, the great defender of the Protestant faith.

Under Gustavus Adolphus the arms of Sweden attained a degree of proficiency and power they had never before achieved, and when he fell at the great battle of Lutzen half the civilized world wept.

It was a raw, dark, foggy morning when the king, riding at the head of one of his regiments, which had been temporarily checked by the masses of imperialists which pressed upon it, was betrayed by his near-sightedness, and suddenly found himself surrounded by the enemy.

A decimating volley swept down all his attendants, and the king was left alone upon the field, wounded and dying, and the thrust of a lance completed the work of death.

The next day, when the Swedes had beaten the enemy and moved on in pursuit of the retreating imperialists, a few of the wounded, who had been left behind, rolled, with great labor, a large stone to the spot where the king had fallen, and roughly cut upon it, "G. A., 1632," the initials of the monarch, and the date of the battle.

The stone remains precisely as placed more than two hundred years ago, but a handsome monument has since been erected over it.

Gustavus' only child and heir was a daughter named Christina, seven years of age, and the parliament was asked to accept this child as the successor of the great Adolphus.

There was some hesitation on the part of the representatives, and they demanded to see her.

She was placed before them, and, after eyeing her intently, one of them exclaimed:

"Yes; she has the eyes and nose of Gustavus Adolphus. Let her be our queen!" and she was unanimously accepted.

A regent was appointed, who governed the country until Christina attained her majority.

The young queen was never popular.

She was essentially masculine, and acquired few of the soft graces of womanhood.

She was untidy in dress and person, shockingly vulgar in speech, and even on public occasions would swear like a trooper.

These peculiarities rapidly weakened the respect the nation entertained for her as the daughter of their great idol, and when, in addition to her other offenses, she abjured the religion for which her illustrious father had given his life, its patience became exhausted, and the queen deemed it prudent to abdicate.

The ceremony of abdication was conducted with due solemnity, and Christina, stripped of every insignia of royalty, shed tears as she descended from the throne.

It was near nightfall, and raining heavily; but the late queen ordered her carriage, and bade her attendants prepare for instant departure. In vain her friends remonstrated.

"I cannot rest here where I was so lately a crowned sovereign," was her answer.

And so, amid the gathering darkness and the rapidly falling rain, the daughter of the great Gustavus quitted her country forever.

Her subsequent life was spent mostly at Rome and Paris.

Catholic sovereigns everywhere extended her a cordial welcome, and she drifted from court to court, accepting honors and flatteries from those who had directed armies against her father and her country.

Scandal followed her wherever she went; her enemies found ample opportunities for censure, and her best friends ample occasion for regret.

It was at Fontainebleu, however, that she committed, or caused to be committed, the crime that will blacken her character forever.

Among the attendants which she had gathered around her was an Italian, Count Monaldeschi.

Between him and another Italian gentleman of the ex-queen's suit, named Sentinelli, a bitter quarrel had long existed, and as both were on intimate terms with her, each industriously sought to prejudice her against the other.

One day Monaldeschi charged Sentinelli with treachery, and declared that any man who would betray the affection or confidence of his mistress was worthy of death.

The ex-queen, whose confidence in Monaldeschi had been somewhat shaken by the tales of his adversary, smiled at the remark, and charged him to remember it, for she might yet be called upon to act upon his judgment.

A few months after this conversation she sent a note to Father Lebel, her confidant and spiritual adviser, requesting to see him at once.

He found her in great rage at the treachery of some of her most trusted attendants, the proof of which had just come to her hands.

The reverend father attempted to calm her indignation, but she would listen to nothing, and, placing a package of papers in his hands, and requesting him to mark them, and note the day and hour they came into his possession, she dismissed him.

Ten days elapsed, and Father Lebel was waited upon by a messenger from Christina, requesting him to call at a certain hour alone, and bring the packet she had previously intrusted to his care.

He went, and was shown into a large hall in an unoccupied wing of the palace.

Christina was in animated conversation with Monaldeschi, and three stalwart men were standing near her.

The door was carefully locked, and they were left alone.

The ex-queen's manner toward the count then suddenly changed.

She demanded the packet from Lebel, opened it, and produced several letters which she handed to the count, and with flashing eyes sternly demanded if they were in his handwriting.

He hesitated, turned pale, and finally confessed that the writing was his, and, falling upon his knees, implored pardon most piteously.

The count trembled, and, seizing the ex-queen's hands, declared that he could explain all.

She listened impatiently, walking rapidly from one side of the room to the other, he following, vehemently uttering his protestations.

When he finally ceased, she having said nothing in the meantime, she came and stood before the priest, and desired him to bear witness how calmly and patiently she had listened to all that that traitor had said.

She then turned to him, and demanded certain keys and documents.

He handed them over, when Christina, approaching the priest, said solemnly:

"Father, I leave this man in your hands; prepare him for death, and have care of his soul."

She turned to leave; but, horror-stricken, both the priest and the intended victim detained her, fell at her feet, and implored mercy, but all in vain.

"He has done that," she said, "for which he deserves to be broken alive on the wheel. He has betrayed me—he, who was trusted with my most important affairs, and my most secret thoughts. I have treated him more kindly than if he had been a brother. His own conscience should be his executioner."

The door closed behind her and she was gone.

The unhappy count turned to Father Lebel, but the three assassins made a step forward, drew their swords, and recommended him to confess.

The poor wretch begged so piteously for life that the murderers were touched with compassion, and their chief, accompanied by the father, sought Christina in her private apartments, and made another effort to soften her resentment.

The priest was especially urgent, and implored her by the love of heaven, by the offended majesty of the King of France, whose palace would be desecrated by the act, and by the good name she would imperil forever, to reconsider her resolve.

She stood firmly on her right to punish a traitorous subject—a right she had expressly reserved in her abdication, protested that she had no personal hatred to Monaldeschi, but again exclaimed:

"He must die."

The priest returned sorrowfully to the hall, where the trembling culprit awaited his doom.

Lebel shook his head, and the count groaned in agony.

The priest took a seat, and did his best to prepare the dying man for the fate which now seemed inevitable.

It was a touching scene, for the priest was smitten with fear and pity, and the penitent was almost speechless with terror.

While these preparations were going on, the door cautiously opened, and one of the officers of Christina's household came into the room.

Monaldeschi at once rushed towards him, and so convulsively did he beg and pray for life that the officer was moved with compassion, and returned to intercede with the cruel woman.

He might as well have addressed a statue of stone.

The officer returned, explained his failure, when one of the swordsmen approached the count, informed him that

longer delay was impossible, and, pushing him into a corner thrust his sword into his right side.

The wounded man frantically caught at the weapon, and as the assailant drew it back, three fingers were cut from the victim's hand.

The point of the sword was broken, and it was discovered that Monaldeschi wore a steel coat of mail.

On making this discovery, his assailant cut him across the face.

The mutilated man screamed, and rushed into the arms of the priest.

The executioners stepped aside a moment at the priest's request, while he hurriedly performed the rite of absolution, and enjoined upon the unhappy man, as a penance, patient endurance of the death he was about to suffer.

The good offices of the clergyman finished, the victim staggered from his arms and fell, receiving as he sank to the floor a terrible cut on the head, which fractured his skull. He retained his consciousness, however, and as he lay helpless and bleeding, he made a sign to one of them to end his misery.

At this sign, one of the men made two or three cuts at his neck, but the struggle had pushed up the coat of mail so that the blows were ineffectual.

Father Lebel meanwhile exhorted the dying man to suffer patiently.

On hearing the exhortation, the chief of the executioners asked if he should deal the deathblow.

The priest replied that he had no counsel to give, that his mission was to beg for mercy, not to enforce justice.

Once again the door of the room softly opened, and the officer aforementioned appeared.

The half-murdered man, mutilated and covered with blood, saw him, and, dragging himself along the floor, extended his hands as if pleading for mercy.

When he breathed his last, they all returned to the queen, to inform her that her commands had been fully accomplished.

She exhibited no emotion, but expressed her regret at having been compelled to execute heaven's judgment on so foul a traitor.

The room was closed, and the corpse remained undisturbed until Monday—the murder was committed on Saturday—when it was privately removed to the parish church and decently buried, Christina paying for one hundred masses for the repose of the soul.

The queen's crime was then complete.

What the precise nature of Monaldeschi's crime was has never been known.

The letters the queen exhibited as his are supposed to have contained some scandal about her, and were intercepted.

They were destroyed as soon as the count was dead, and the mystery remains a mystery still.

The crime soon became known throughout Europe, and everywhere excited disgust and horror.

It was in vain Christina claimed that at the time of her abdication she had expressly reserved the rights of a sovereign over her attendants.

She lived forty years after the murder, and died without expressing any regret for her part in the fearful tragedy.

NEWS OF THE DAY

The first postoffice ever established was in Vienna, Austria, nearly four hundred years ago, in 1516. From this office mail was sent to Brussels, Belgium, where a postoffice was later established. Posts were established regularly between London and the principal towns throughout England in 1635. Postage stamps were introduced in England in 1840, and in the United States in 1847.

The beach in the vicinity of Playa del Rey, Cal., is lined with hundreds of tons of seaweed washed up by the tides. In the seaweed were hundreds of fish, tangled in the meshes. Fishermen believe the presence of so much weed indicates either an eruption at the bottom of the ocean or a heavy storm at sea. The city will be put to the necessity of carting it all away. Some of the fish washed up are members of the shark family and measure three feet in length. Innumerable small sand crabs came up with the seaweed.

For five days hundreds of visitors from summer resorts near Brookline, N. H., were attracted to this small town to witness a strange sight, namely, to see an old mother hen feed four baby swallows and cuddle them fondly under her wings. For five days the hen cared for the baby swallows. The sixth day Mr. Campbell, the owner of the motherly hen, went to the poultry yard and found that the five days of constant attention had proved too much and the baby swallows were dead.

Christian workers at Tokyo, Japan, find that the European war is obstructing the propagation of the Gospel. Non-Christians taunt Christians with the fact that nations calling themselves Christians are engaging in a war of annihilation contrary to the teachings of the Prince of Peace. This, they say, indicates that the power of Christianity is waning, that so-called Christian civilization is merely a veneer, and that the inconsistencies of nominally Christian nations are the greatest obstacles to mission work.

A modern Indian wedding contains a grotesque combination of civilization and barbarism, as will be seen from the following account of a marriage ceremony which recently occurred in Oklahoma: "The bride was handsomely attired in pink silk foulard, with pink silk ribbon sash, blue collar and cuffs, black hat with yellow and lavender trimmings, a green veil and black gloves. The bridegroom wore the conventional black, except his coat, which, it being a warm day, he had left at home. He carried an immense eagle wing."

It does not look as if we shall get out of coal, at any rate this winter. It is estimated that beneath the earth's crust there are about 8,000,000,000,000 yards of coal at depths available for the use of man—in round numbers a

little over 7,000,000,000,000 tons. Of this store Great Britain has available for use about a fiftieth part, or, according to the best estimates, 145,000 millions of tons. One would hardly believe that Great Britain, though it has hardly reached the fulness of its growth or the full development of its civilization, consumes more than one hundred and fifty millions of tons each year, a rate of consumption that would exhaust her whole store in about nine hundred years. The world's store, it is estimated, will be exhausted in about two thousand years.

An automobile club at Knoxville, Tenn., has offered fifty dollars reward for the conviction of the guilty party who placed about a peck of tacks on the Islahome pike, which is traveled by President Plyly of the club on his way to and from home. The act is attributed to desire for revenge on the automobile club for tearing down advertising signs along pikes. President Plyly has removed several hundred signs during the last few months. The tacks were picked up by the automobile people, and they have been traced to a certain firm doing business in another city that advertises tacking signs on fences and trees. The tacks punctured the tire of a well-known doctor who was making a call upon a patient.

In the jungle near Naina Ta, says a Bombay letter, a wild-looking creature, apparently a human female child, has been found. That she is human is proved by the fact that there are vaccination marks on both arms, but exposure to the elements has caused a thick growth of hair down each side of the face and spine, which makes her appearance more like that of a monkey than a human being. There is evidence to show she has always walked upright, but her sitting posture is that of a monkey, as are all her actions. She was very much frightened when first caught, and cried and whimpered. She would eat only grass and raw potatoes, but later was induced to take bread and milk. She is unable to talk, but there is no doubt that she can hear.

Having made a wager in Harry Cooper's saloon, in Philadelphia, Pa., that he could drink twenty glasses of whisky in as many minutes, John Langer, forty-two years old, collapsed while lifting the sixteenth glass to his lips. He died, a short time later, in the back room of the saloon. After the wager was made, the little glasses were lined up on the bar and Langer started. Taking each at a gulp, he passed down the line until he came to the fifteenth, when he grew ill. "Plenty of time," said the bartender. "Go back and sit down for a moment." Langer said nothing, but shook his head and started to drink the sixteenth. He had half finished the sixteenth glass, when he dropped it on the floor and staggered into the back room. The men waited for him to appear, and then went back to the room. They found him stretched on the floor, unconscious.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

STRANGE FINDS IN BOOKS.

City libraries are prolific producers of odd incidents. Articles of every kind and description are found in returned volumes. There is, for example, a well-known bookmark, endeared to its owner by some association, which has been found in returned books at least one hundred times. On two occasions indorsed checks were discovered between the leaves of works of fiction. The first check, for a large sum of money, was left by a young girl, who quickly realized her loss, and came back breathless to find the check still in the book just where she had left it. The second check was in a book returned by a young man one evening just before the library closed. He was waiting, haggard and wan, on the doorsill when the building was opened next morning, and stated that as the check belonged to his brother, who was ignorant of the loss, the night had known no sleep for him. As may be imagined, letters are left in books by the wholesale. If sealed, addressed, and lack a stamp, it is supplied, and they are sent on their way. But opened letters addressed to persons not known are kept a reasonable length of time and then destroyed. Spectacles and even scissors are frequently found, but usually claimed by the owner. Occasionally when subscribers desire some book not in the library collection it is purchased and added to the list. Several years ago a subscriber asked for a little volume entitled, "Monologues of the Dead." It was bought. Weeks later, and after the gentleman's death by suicide, the book was returned.

MARANVILLE ACCEPTED 980 CHANCES IN GAMES DURING PAST SEASON.

If any proof were needed of the exceptional speed of Walter Maranville, shortstop of the Boston Braves, the evidence might be found in the fielding averages for the season which has just closed. The "Rabbit" did not lead the shortstops. Of the regulars, both Wagner and Jack Miller topped him, but Maranville in 156 games accepted 980 chances. The best previous mark for the number of chances accepted by a shortstop was 955, which was made twenty-two years ago by Allen, of the Phillies.

Maranville made more errors than many of the shortstops in the National League, but this is easily explained on account of the amount of ground he covered. No less than 572 assists were credited to him. Fletcher always has been considered a wide roaming shortstop, but his record of assists last season was only 433. The best that Wagner could do was 455.

But not content with one marvel Boston produced another. Tris Speaker, center fielder of the Red Sox, shattered a record on his account. Speaker handled 56 chances. The best previous record for an outfielder belonged to Slagle, of the Cubs, who accepted 424 chances in 1899. Some realization of Speaker's ground covering ability may be had from a comparison of his record with that of Clyde

Milan, speediest of the Senators. In 158 games Speaker made 427 put-outs. In 116 Milan made exactly 235.

The only man who came within one hundred of Speaker's put-out record was Bert Shotten, of the Browns, who captured 359 flies in 155 games. Speaker's superiority in throwing was almost as manifest, as he made 29 assists, compared to 21 for Harry Hooper, of the Red Sox, his nearest throwing rival in the league.

Perhaps the most worthy rival for Tris Speaker was George Burns, in the National League. Playing most of the time in left field, where the number of chances is slightly less than in center, Burns in 154 games made 323 put-outs. He threw out 23 men.

THE REASONING POWER OF A SPIDER.

The instinct of the spider is always an interesting subject for study. Recently a naturalist placed a small spider in the center of a large spider's web some four feet above ground. The large spider soon rushed from its hiding place under a leaf to attack the intruder, which ran up one of the ascending lines by which the web was secured to the foliage.

The big insect gained rapidly upon the little one, but the fugitive was equal to the emergency, for when barely an inch ahead of the other it cut with one of its rear legs the line behind itself, thus securing its own escape, the ferocious pursuer falling to the ground.

The naturalist says: "It is not the habit of spiders to cut the slender thread below them when they are ascending to avoid some threatened danger unless there is a hole close at hand—and a hole that is known to be unoccupied." From this it would seem that the little creature's action was the result of some sort of reasoning. Instinct led it to run away, but it must have been something more than instinct that led it to sever the line, and cut off the pursuit.

The same naturalist says that spiders are cannibals, and that they are naturally pugnacious. But they do not fight for the satisfaction of eating one another. "When two spiders fight there is generally a very good reason for the attack and the vigorous defense that follows.

"It is generally known that after a certain time spiders become incapable of spinning a web from lack of material. The glutinous excretion from which the slender threads are spun is limited, therefore spiders cannot keep on constructing new snares when the old ones are destroyed. But they can avail themselves of the web-producing powers of their younger neighbors, and this they do without scruple. As soon as a spider's web-constructing material has become exhausted and its last web destroyed, it sets out in search of another home, and unless it should chance to find one that is tenantless a battle usually ensues, which ends only with the retreat or death of the invader or defender."

BOY'S SLING-SHOT.



Just the thing to hit targets, dogs, rats, or any other small game. It has a solid metal handle, with powerful rubber strap. Shoots straight, and works as fast as lightning. The very best bean-shooter on the market. Price, 15 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

TRICK COIN HOLDER.

The coin holder is attached to a ring made so as to fit anyone's finger. The holder clasps tightly a 25c. piece. When the ring is placed on the finger with the coin showing on the palm of the hand and offered in change it cannot be picked up. A nice way to tip people.

Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

VANISHING PACK OF CARDS.

You exhibit a neat black card case, you request from the audience a ring, a watch, bracelet, or other jewelry articles. You propose to fill the case with a pack of cards. After doing so, the pack of cards disappear from the case, and the jewelry novelties appear instead.

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FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

INDIAN FINGER TRAP.

A couple can be joined together and their struggle to be released only makes matters worse. It will hold them as tight as a rat-trap, and the more they try to pull away, the tighter it grips. Our traps are extra long. Price, 10c. each; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

HAPPY HOOLIGAN JOKER.

With this joker in the lapel of your coat, you can make a dead shot every time. Complete with rubber ball and tubing. Price, 15c. by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

FALSE MUSTACHE AND BEARD.

This is a novelty whereby you can make a great number of changes; in fact, you can so disguise yourself that your best friend won't know you. This mustache and beard are so made that you can fix the same to your face and they will stay on. They are a very valuable acquisition to your make-up when you mask or when you take part in some amateur theatrical. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. a set; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

MAGIC PIPE.

Made of a regular corn-cob pipe, with rubber figures inside; by blowing through the stem the figure will jump out. Made in following figures: rabbits, donkeys, cats, chickens, etc.

Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE TOM-TOM DRUM.

Hold the drum in one hand and with the thumb of the other resting against the side of the drum manipulate the drumstick with the fingers of the same hand (as indicated in the cut). With practice it is possible to attain as great skill as with a real drum. The movable sounding board can be adjusted for either heavy or light playing. They are used extensively in schools for marching.

Price, 10c. each, delivered free.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE LITTLE GEM TELEPHONE.

The transmitter in this telephone is made from the best imported parchment; with ordinary use will last a long time; can be made in any length by adding cord; the only real telephone for the money; each one put up in a neat box; fully illustrated, with full directions how to use them. Price, 12c. postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

IMITATION CUT FINGER.



A cardboard finger, carefully bandaged with linen, and the side and end are blood-stained. When you slip it on your finger and show it to your friends, just give a groan or two, nu se it up, and pull a look of pain. You will get nothing but sympathy until you give them the laugh.

Then duck! Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



SPIRIT SLATE-WRITING.—No trick has ever puzzled the scientists more and created a greater sensation than the famous spirit-writings which appear between sealed slates which have freely been shown cleaned, carefully tied together and given to a spectator to hold. These spirits answer questions. Sold by us complete, slates and secret. No chemical used.

Price, 75c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



THE MULTIPLYING CORKS.—A small round box is shown to be empty and one of the spectators is allowed to place three corks in it. The cover is put on and the box is handed to one of the spectators, who, upon removing the cover, finds six corks in the box. Three of the corks are now made to vanish as mysteriously as they came. Very deceptive.

Price, 15c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

SURPRISE PERFUME BOTTLE.



Those in the joke may freely smell the perfume in the bottle, but the uninitiated, on removing the cork will receive the contents in his hands. This is a simple and clever joke.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG,
1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE PHANTOM FINGER.



As these fingers are cast in moulds in which a person's fingers have been encased, they are a lifelike model of the same. The finger can be made to pass through a person's hat or coat without injury to the hat or garment. It appears to be your own finger. A perfect illusion. Price, 15c.; 2 for 25c., postpaid.

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THE GERMAN OCARINO.



A handsome metal instrument, made in Germany, from which peculiar but sweet music can be produced.

Its odd shape, which resembles a torpedo boat, will attract much attention. We send instructions with each instrument, by the aid of which anyone can in a short time play any tune and produce very sweet music on this odd-looking instrument.

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WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SCARF-PINS.



Genuine Sterling Silver Scarf-pins of various designs. They are set with two brilliant Rhinestones. These pins retail for 50 cents in all jewelry stores. Price by mail, postpaid, 15 cents each.

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LOTS OF FUN.



Ventriloquist Double Throat. Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary, and imitate birds and beasts of the field and forest. Leads of Fun. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Send a dime and a 2c stamp for one dozen.

DOUBLE THROAT CO., Dept. K, Frenchtown, N. J.

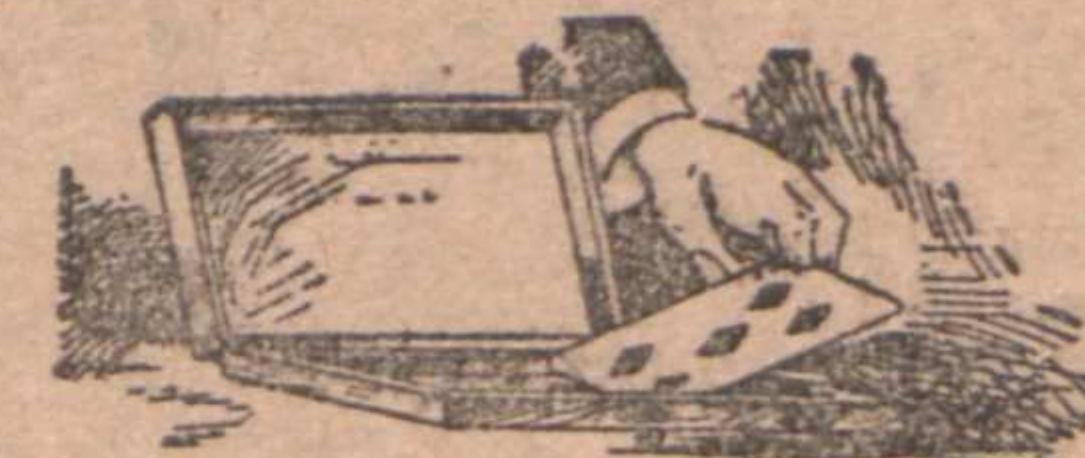
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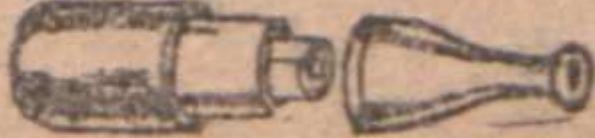


MAGIC CARD BOX.—A very cleverly made box of exchanging or vanishing cards. In fact, any number of tricks of this character can be performed by it. A very necessary magical accessory.

Price, 15c.

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A beautiful ebonized cigar holder that takes pictures. Every smoker who loves fun will want one to entertain his friends. We furnish with each holder material, all prepared, for making six different photographs, and guarantee every paper to produce a completely finished photograph if directions are followed. Directions—Take holder apart at the joints, roll up one of the small blank papers (six furnished with each holder) and insert it in the holder. Put the holder together and smoke a cigar for one minute. A beautiful finished photograph will appear on the paper, which can be taken out and preserved for years. Price of holder, with six blank pictures, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid; extra blanks, 5c. per dozen.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

CARTER AEROPLANE No. 1.



Will fly on a horizontal line 150 feet! Can be flown in the house, and will not injure itself nor anything in the room. The most perfect little aeroplane made. The motive power is furnished by twisted rubber bands contained within the tubular body of the machine. It is actuated by a propeller at each end revolving in opposite directions. Variation in height may be obtained by moving the planes and the balance weight. It can be made to fly either to the right or the left by moving the balance sideways before it is released for flight. Price, 35c. each, delivered.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

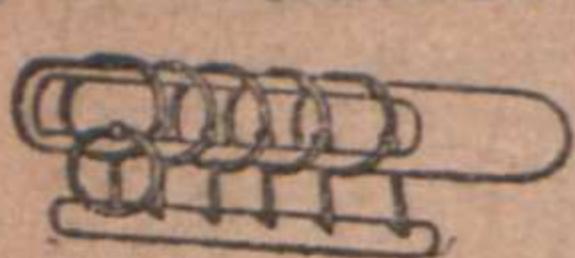
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Here is a genuine "corker." The object is to remove the handle from the rings. Made of polished brass and each one in a box. The bar can be taken out and replaced in less than five minutes without bending the rings or bar, when you know how to do the trick. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c.; 3 for 25c. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

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This pencil is made up in handsome style and looks so inviting that every one will want to look at it. The natural thing to do is to write with it, and just as soon as your friend tries to write, the entire inside of the pencil flies back like a jumping jack, and "Mr. Nosy" will be frightened stiff. It is one of our best pencil tricks and you will have a hard job trying to keep it. Your friends will try to take it from you. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

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they will be unable to open it. Price by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

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TRICK PUZZLE PURSE.

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they will be unable to open it. Price by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

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RISING PENCIL.—The performer exhibits an ordinary pencil and shows its top and bottom. The pencil is laid on the palm, the performer calling attention to his hypnotic power over innate objects. The pencil is seen slowly to rise, following the movements of the other hand. The witnesses are asked to pass their hand around it to assure themselves no thread or hair is used.

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A great Sensational Trick of the Day! With the Fire Eater in his possession any person can become a perfect salamander, apparently breathing fire and ejecting thousands of brilliant sparks from his mouth, to the horror and consternation of all beholders. Harmless fun for all times, seasons and places. If you wish to produce a decided sensation in your neighborhood don't fail to procure one. We send the Fire Eater with all the materials, in a handsome box, the cover of which is highly ornamented with illustrations in various colors. Price of all complete only 15c., or 4 boxes for 50c., mailed postpaid; one dozen by express \$1.20.

N. B.—Full printed instructions for performing the trick accompany each box, which also contains sufficient material for giving several exhibitions.

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THE HIDEOUS SPIDER.



Fun for everybody with one of these handsome brutes. His body is 3 inches long, beautifully enamelled green, with white ridges, yellow

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THE PRINCESS OF YOGI CARD TRICK.

Four cards are held in the form of a fan and a spectator is requested to mentally select one of the four. The cards are now shuffled and one is openly taken away and placed in his pocket. The performer remarks that he has taken the card mentally selected by the spectator. The three cards are now displayed and the selected card is found to be missing. Reaching in his pocket the performer removes and exhibits the chosen card. Price, 15c.

A. A. WARFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

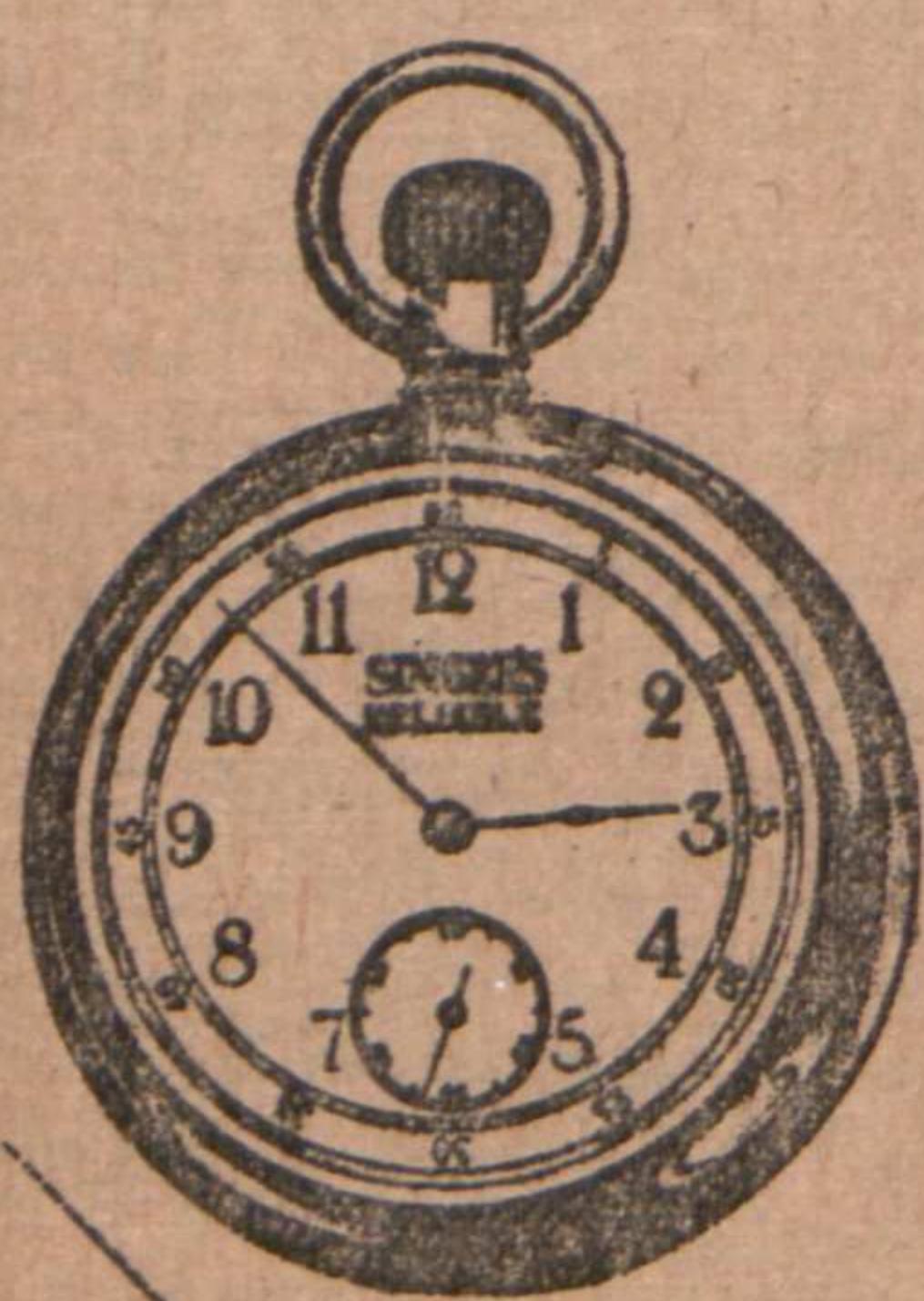
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